

**FAITH AS TRUST:
FAITH IN LOCKE, KIERKEGAARD AND CARNELL
AS THE BASIS FOR A THEORY OF
EVANGELICAL EDUCATION**

**A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Theology at Claremont**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy**

**by
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Due to extenuating circumstances, final edits were not completed for this project.

ABSTRACT

Faith as Trust: Faith in Locke, Kierkegaard and Carnell as the Basis for a Theory of Evangelical Education

by

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A frequent criticism of American evangelical education is that educators do not often step back from their practical work to engage in theological reflection. This project is a theological reflection around the issue, "What is the nature of faith?" First, two poles of understanding of faith are explored by an examination of the faith theories of John Locke and Soren Kierkegaard. These were chosen because their views of faith exemplify and illumine the current tensions within evangelicalism. Evangelical theologian E. J. Carnell's understanding of faith as trust is employed to develop a middle view of faith.

Locke asserted that faith was mere assent to propositions. A similar view is being espoused by evangelicals such as Zane Hodges. Kierkegaard understands faith as a passionate commitment not dependent on rational argument. The contemporary defender of Lordship salvation, John MacArthur, echoes much the same view when he defines saving faith as total commitment, not doctrinal assent.

Carnell's systematic classification of faith begins with the categories of general and vital faith. General faith encompasses knowledge and assent and is also the domain of knowledge by acquaintance and inference. Vital faith is the currency of interpersonal interaction including knowledge by moral self-acceptance and cordial

trust in God. This understanding is consonant both with Locke's "faith as assent to propositions" and Kierkegaard's "faith as absolute passionate commitment."

Three additional elements are proposed as enhancements to Carnell's middle view of faith. The first is the addition of a Kierkegaard-like concept of miracle as a condition for true saving faith. The second enhancement is a Lockean understanding of miracles as a rational basis for faith. The third element is a conception of trust as the underlying principle active within each of Carnell's forms of faith. The resulting reconstructed view of faith is employed as a criterion for critiquing evangelical theorists and curricula and then applied to a sketch of the dimensions of a theory of evangelical Christian education based on faith as trust.

Any who know me, even reasonably well, will harbor no doubt that a task of this magnitude, particularly stretched over such an expanse of time, could not have come to an end without heaps of encouragement and a great deal of practical help. My special thanks to so many who have written notes, phoned, or sent e-mail from literally all over the world. That you would keep me in your thoughts and prayers, especially during these last few trying months is a gift I treasure.

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The Garden and Dinner Table Were Her Classroom,

The Earth and Heavens Her Curriculum.

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The Need for Theological Reflection - see meaning on p. 15 which?

*↑ Faith as Assent
See meaning on p. 31.
which?*

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what you mean

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CHAPTER 1

The Need in Evangelical Education for a View of Faith which Embodies both Reason and Passionate Commitment

Background of the Dissertation Problem

According to Harold Ockenga, the contemporary American evangelical movement was born in the 1940s.¹ Although this movement embraced theological assumptions similar to fundamentalism which preceded it, evangelicalism broke with fundamentalism's separatism, both theological and social.

It differed from fundamentalism in its repudiation of separatism and its determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day. It had a new emphasis upon the application of the gospel to the sociological, political, and economic areas of life.²

Four characteristics which can serve to distinguish the current American evangelical movement are: rationalistic adherence to a particular set of doctrinal beliefs (the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, a God who performs miracles, etc.);³ an emphasis on experiential Christian

¹ Harold J. Ockenga, forward to The Battle for the Bible, by Harold Lindsell (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1976), 10-11. Ockenga dates the movement's origin to a convocation address he gave in 1948 although it could be argued that it began with the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942. See Earle E. Cairns, "National Association of Evangelicals," in The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1974), 694.

² Ockenga, 11.

³ These doctrinal distinctives are summarized as "Trinitarian supernaturalism" by Donald Tinder, "Evangelicalism," in The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1974), 361.

commitment; a belief in biblical authority; and self identification as "evangelical." The first three of these characteristics would be widely endorsed by both evangelical leaders and non-evangelical observers. Ronald Nash defines an evangelical as

a Protestant Christian who accepts the traditional (orthodox) beliefs of the Christian faith, who believes that human beings need to be brought into a personal saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and who accepts the Bible as the ultimate authority on Christian belief and practice.⁴

Writing in the New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, associate editor of Christianity Today Donald Tinder defines "evangelicalism" as

the international movement which is committed to the historic Protestant understanding of the Evangel. Its adherents should be distinguished from those of three other broad groupings within professing Christianity: non-evangelical Protestantism; Catholics and the so-called sects and cults. Evangelicalism has become the defender of the historically orthodox Protestant theologies (and their subsequent variations) and the underlying biblical exegesis Because of its emphasis on personal commitment (rather than comprehension of all of a given population) and acceptance of the Bible as the basis for its authority (rather than institutional bishops in supposed apostolic succession), Evangelicalism has remained clearly distinct from Catholicism, both Roman and Orthodox, despite their common Trinitarian supernaturalism in the

⁴ Ronald H. Nash, Christian Faith and Historical Understanding (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1983), 19. This is essentially the view of Harold Ockenga in the forward to Lindsell's Battle for the Bible, 10-11. See also John Jefferson Davis, "Future Directions for American Evangelicals," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 29(1986): 461. This definition is echoed by such non-evangelical observers as Cox, Hordern, and Gier. See Harvey Cox, Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 45-46; William E. Hordern, A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 55-56; and Nicholas F. Gier, God, Reason, and the Evangelicals (Lanham, Md.: Univ. Press of America, 1987), 1.

face of naturalistic trends in Protestantism. Evangelicalism's acceptance of historic Trinitarianism, however, distinguished it from various non-Protestant sectarian movements--Mormonism, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.⁵

One recent non-evangelical observer, Lutheran Mark Ellingsen, has noted the surprising unanimity among those attempting to define modern evangelicalism.

A remarkable continuity exists among these various attempts to characterize the Evangelical movement. From critics to adherents, analysts of the Evangelical movement have commonly identified certain characteristics which they attribute to the movement.⁶

But Ellingsen proposes an additional criterion for inclusion under the umbrella "evangelical." He advocates viewing individuals and groups as evangelical only if they acknowledge themselves as such.

My method for arriving at conclusions about the Evangelical movement has been that one must begin sociologically, only with a consideration of those persons and organizations explicitly identifying themselves as Evangelical

Ellingsen argues that the inclusion of the criterion of self identification is important not only to more accurately define who should be viewed as evangelical but also to preserve the discrete identity of various groups which might otherwise be insensitively lumped together as "evangelical" based on the other three criteria.

⁵ Tinder, 361. The first three of these characteristics would be widely endorsed by both evangelical leaders and non-evangelical observers. This is essentially the view of Ockenga, 10-11. See also Davis, 461. This definition is echoed by such non-evangelical observers as Cox, Hordern, and Gier. See Cox, 45-46; Hordern, 55-56; and Gier, 1-2.

⁶ Mark Ellingsen, The Evangelical Movement: Growth, Impact, Controversy, Dialog (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 47.

This method of analysis in turn allows us to pay some attention to those theologically conservative groups which many consider Evangelical but which do not identify themselves as part of the Evangelical movement.

Ellingsen then suggests that the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, the Southern Baptist Convention, and many Fundamentalist groups might fit in this ambiguous category of meeting the other definitional criteria but not wishing to be viewed as evangelicals. What further complicates Ellingsen's suggestion is that many individuals within these ambiguous groups do identify themselves as evangelicals even when the majority within their groups may not. But even with this difficulty, Ellingsen's proposal seems worthy of inclusion in the definition.

Therefore we will consider as evangelical those persons who hold to the primacy of a personal commitment to Christ, a Trinitarian orthodoxy, the authority of scripture, and who view themselves as evangelicals.⁸

The first two of these distinguishing marks, rationalism and experience, are central to the self-understanding of American evangelical Christians. By "rationalism" is meant the belief that a crucial element of being Christian is to give mental assent to a certain set of

⁷ Ellingsen, 48.

⁸ While some evidence has suggested that approximately half of all American Protestant laity and clergy are evangelicals (See "The Christianity Today Gallup Poll: An Overview," Christianity Today, 21 Dec. 1979, 12-15), acceptance of the criterion of self identification would undoubtedly reduce the numbers substantially. See George Marsden, "The Evangelical Denomination," Evangelicalism and Modern America, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), ix.

propositions. Historically, groups that emphasize this criterion are often referred to as "confessional" or "creedal." By "experiential" is meant the belief that what makes one Christian is an experience with God, often referred to in evangelical circles as "conversion," "being saved," "accepting Christ," etc.

The Lordship Salvation Controversy

Frequently these two elements of evangelical distinctiveness produce conflict within evangelical theology. A current example is the controversy over the nature of saving faith. Some hold that faith is simply an intellectual acceptance of certain doctrinal propositions while others contend that a personal commitment of "accepting Christ as Lord" is necessary. This controversy, which has always been a minor theme within American evangelicalism, moved to the status of a central decisive issue with the 1988 publication by John MacArthur, Jr. of The Gospel According to Jesus. The issue became the subject of the primary plenary paper (given by John MacArthur) and responses (by Earl Radmacher and Robert Saucy) at the 1989 national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in San Diego, California.⁹ Evangelical theologian Millard Erickson identifies Zane Hodges and

⁹ The current writer was present at this meeting. The paper by MacArthur and the responses by Radmacher and Saucy were subsequently published (with only minor changes) in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. See John MacArthur, Jr., "Faith According to the Apostle James," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society [Hereafter referred to as JETS] 33 (Mar. 1990): 13-34; Earl D. Radmacher, "First response to 'Faith According to the Apostle James' by John F. MacArthur, Jr.," JETS 33 (Mar. 1990): 35-41; Robert L. Saucy, "Second Response to 'Faith According to the Apostle James' by John F. MacArthur, Jr.," JETS 33 (Mar. 1990): 42-47.

John MacArthur, Jr. as the major representative proponents of these two views of faith.

The "free grace" school of thought, represented especially by Zane Hodges, former New Testament professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, and the "lordship theology" view, advocated principally by John MacArthur, pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church of Sun Valley, California, have for several years engaged in debate in print.¹⁰

The writings of these two authors will now be examined as exemplary of the views of faith in question.

Evangelical Tendencies Toward Understanding Faith as Rational Assent

In Absolutely Free!, Zane Hodges offers his version of the development of the (in his view, erroneous) lordship salvation movement.¹¹

Over a period of many years the idea has gained ground that true saving faith is somehow distinguishable from false kinds of faith, primarily by means of its results or "fruits."

Thus two men might believe exactly the same things in terms of content, yet if one of them exhibited what seemed to be a "fruitless" Christian experience, his faith would be condemned as "intellectual assent," or "head belief" over against "heart belief." In a word, his faith was false faith--it was faith that did not, and could not, save.

With such ideas as these, the ground was prepared for full-fledged lordship theology. It remained for the lordship thinkers to take the matter one step further.

What was really missing in false faith, so they affirmed, were the elements of true repentance and submission to God. Thus, saving faith ought not to be defined in terms of trust alone, but also in terms of commitment to the will of God. In the absence of this kind of submission, they

¹⁰ Millard J. Erickson, "Lordship Theology: The Current Controversy," Southwestern Journal of Theology 33 (Spring 1991):5.

¹¹ This book is clearly meant as a refutation of MacArthur's The Gospel According to Jesus. Hodges directly refutes MacArthur in more than 20 of the book's endnotes, often at considerable length.

insisted, one could not describe his faith as biblical saving faith.¹²

In contradistinction to lordship theology, Hodges champions a view of faith that he describes as simple and free of any connotation of volitional elements such as submission, surrender or repentance.

Let it be clearly stated here that English words like to "believe," or "faith" function as fully adequate equivalents to their Greek counterparts. There is not some hidden residue of meaning in the Greek words that is not conveyed by their normal English renderings. Although some have affirmed that there is, this claim betrays an inadequate or misguided view of biblical linguistics.

It follows that a Greek reader who met the words "he who believes in Me has everlasting life," would understand the word "believe" exactly as we do. The reader most certainly would not understand this word to imply submission, surrender, repentance, or anything else of this sort. For those readers, as for us, "to believe" meant "to believe."

Surely it is one of the conceits of modern theology to suppose that we can define away simple terms like "belief" and "unbelief" and replace their obvious meanings with complicated elaborations. The confusion produced by this sort of process has a pervasive influence in the church today.

The solution, however, is to return to the plain meaning of the biblical text.¹³

Writing of Jesus' explanation of faith to the Samaritan woman, Hodges asserts,

Its very lack of complication is part of its grandeur. It is all a matter of giving and receiving and no other conditions are attached It must be emphasized that there is no call here for surrender, submission, acknowledgment of Christ's Lordship, or anything else of this kind. A gift is being offered to one totally unworthy of God's

¹² Zane C. Hodges, Absolutely Free! (Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1989), 27.

¹³ Hodges, Absolutely Free!, 29.

favor. And to get it the woman is required to make no spiritual commitment what so ever.¹⁴

So for Hodges, faith does not include any form of spiritual commitment.

For the words of our living and all-powerful Lord stand as an authoritative and immutable testimony to God's gracious way of salvation: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life" (Jn 6:47).

There are no other conditions. There are no hidden clauses or commitments. Whoever wants it, can have it.¹⁵

Rather, faith is an inward conviction that what God said is true.

What faith really is, in biblical language, is receiving the testimony of God. It is the inward conviction that what God says to us in the gospel is true. That--and that alone--is saving faith.¹⁶

For Hodges, inward conviction of truth (and nothing else) constitutes saving faith. In answering critics who have accused him of defining faith as "mere mental assent," Hodges replies,

But the most misleading of all the lordship code-word expressions is the phrase "intellectual (or, mental) assent."

Usually what is implied by this phrase is a type of belief that is emotionally and volitionally remote and disinterested. Words like "intellectual" or "mental" are primarily to blame for this.

If I say, "That man has only an intellectual interest in politics," I have implied that his interest is too detached and academic. The same effect is produced in English when I say, "He has only given the proposition his mental assent." Again, I am suggesting detachment and personal disinterest.

But suppose I say, "I made an important point, and he assented." Then the effect is different. I imply by these

¹⁴ Hodges, The Gospel Under Siege (Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1981), 14.

¹⁵ Hodges, Absolutely Free!, 202.

¹⁶ Hodges, Absolutely Free!, 31.

words a meaningful agreement with what I have said. And there is no negative undertone of any kind."¹⁷

Although he initially balks at the connotation of the term, "mental assent," Hodges eventually acknowledges that (properly defined) mental assent to propositions does describe his view of faith.

Hodges views repentance as separate from saving faith.

It is an extremely serious matter when the biblical distinction between faith and repentance is collapsed and when repentance is thus made a condition for eternal life. For under this perception of things the New Testament doctrine of faith is radically rewritten and held hostage to the demand for repentance.¹⁸

Although repentance may accompany saving faith it is not crucial to it.

. . . though genuine repentance may precede salvation (as we shall see), it need not do so. And because it is not essential to the saving transaction as such, it is in no sense a condition for that transaction.¹⁹

Speaking of the absence of the word, repentance from the Gospel of John, Hodges asserts,

The fourth gospel says nothing at all about repentance, much less does it connect repentance in any way with eternal life.

This fact is the death knell for lordship theology. Only a resolute blindness can resist the obvious conclusion: John did not regard repentance as a condition for eternal life. If he had, he would have said so. After all, that's what his book is all about: obtaining eternal life (Jn 20:30-31).²⁰

¹⁷ Hodges, Absolutely Free!, 30.

¹⁸ Hodges, Absolutely Free!, 145.

¹⁹ Hodges, Absolutely Free!, 146.

²⁰ Hodges, Absolutely Free!, 148.

A number of other evangelicals have written defending the free grace view of salvation who hold an understanding of saving faith that is akin to Hodges. Theologian Charles Ryrie gives this definition of faith,

Faith means confidence, trust, to hold something as true. Of course, faith must have content; there must be confidence or trust about something. To have faith in Christ unto salvation means to have confidence that He can remove the guilt of sin and grant eternal life.²¹

For Ryrie, saving faith is to have confidence to hold as true certain beliefs about Christ.²² Livingston Blauvelt, Jr. holds a similar view of the nature of belief.

Faith is required for salvation, but the term "faith" in the New Testament sense involves believing that Jesus of Nazareth is Christ the Son of God and that He died for one's sins and rose from the dead.²³

So for these evangelicals, faith is accepting as true certain propositions about Jesus and or what He has done.

Evangelical Tendencies Toward Understanding

Faith as Passionate Commitment

This section will examine the views of John MacArthur, Jr. As the representative and currently most vocal advocate of the lordship salvation view. MacArthur prefers not to be associated with the label

²¹ Charles C. Ryrie, Basic Theology (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1986), 326.

²² See also Ryrie's Balancing the Christian Life (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972).

²³ Livingston Blauvelt, Jr., "Does the Bible Teach Lordship Salvation?" Bibliotheca Sacra 143 (1986):43.

"lordship salvation" (much as Hodges resists calling his view "mere mental assent") but acknowledges that what is denoted by those words does, in fact, describe his position.

I don't like the term "lordship salvation." It was coined by those who want to eliminate the idea of submission to Christ from the call to saving faith, and it implies that Jesus' lordship is a false addition to the gospel. As we shall see, however, "lordship salvation"²⁴ is simply the biblical and historic doctrine of soteriology.

In the same context, MacArthur asserts,

No promise of salvation is ever extended to those who refuse to accede to Christ's lordship. Thus there is no salvation except "lordship" salvation.²⁵

Consider this summative statement from the conclusion of John MacArthur's recent book on the subject.

Remember that the primary factor in any person's coming to Christ is not how much doctrine he or she knows. The real issue is the extent of God's work in the heart. Even the most mature believer does not comprehend all of God's truth. We can only begin to fathom the riches of God's Word in this present life. Full understanding of every aspect of the gospel certainly is not required for salvation. After all, the thief on the cross next to Jesus knew only that he himself was guilty and that Jesus, who was the Lord and the true Messiah, had done nothing wrong (Luke 23:40-42). How did he know that much? As Jesus said to Peter, "Flesh and blood did not reveal this . . . but My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17). The thief's appeal was simple: "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" (v. 42). But despite the meager amount of doctrine he knew, our Lord assured him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (v. 43).

²⁴ MacArthur, The Gospel According to Jesus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, Academie Books, 1988), 28-29. Hereafter this book will be referred to as Gospel.

²⁵ MacArthur, Gospel, 28.

It is the Holy Spirit's task, not ours, to offer assurance (Rom. 8:14-16).²⁶

Although is not opposed to doctrinal teaching, assent to doctrinal propositions is not the crucial ingredient in saving faith. The work of God in the heart of the believer is the condition of faith. A total commitment and changed life on the part of the believer is the only valid evidence that the faith was real.

Jesus insisted on a theology of lordship that involved obedience, not lip service. He chided the disobedient ones who had attached themselves to him in name only: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I say?"²⁷

For MacArthur, repentance must be a part of faith or it is not true saving faith.

Repentance is a critical element of saving faith, but one must never dismiss it as simply another word for believing. The Greek word for "repentance" is metanoia, from meta, "after" and noeo "to understand." Literally it means "afterthought" or "change of mind," but biblically its meaning does not stop there. As metanoia is used in the New Testament, it always speaks of a change of purpose, and specifically a turning from sin. In the sense Jesus used it, repentance calls for a repudiation of the old life and a turning to God for salvation.²⁸

Repentance is a decision of the will.

It is a redirection of the human will, a purposeful decision to forsake all unrighteousness and pursue righteousness instead.²⁹

²⁶ MacArthur, Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 209.

²⁷ MacArthur, "Faith According to the Apostle James," JETS 33 (Mar. 1990): 33.

²⁸ MacArthur, Gospel, 162.

²⁹ MacArthur, Gospel, 163.

Repentance is a wholehearted radical commitment.

Above all, repentance is not a pre-salvation attempt to set one's life in order. The call to repentance is not a command to make sin right before turning to Christ in faith. Rather it is a command to recognize one's lawlessness and hate it, to turn one's back on it and flee to Christ, embracing Him with wholehearted devotion. As J. I. Packer has written, "the repentance that Christ requires of his people consists in a settled refusal to set any limit to the claims which He may make on their lives."³⁰

Again MacArthur stresses that repentance is not merely a change of mental assent, but a radical redirection of the will.

Volitionally, repentance involves a change of direction, a transformation of the will. Far from being only a change of mind, it constitutes a willingness--more accurately, a determination--to abandon stubborn disobedience and surrender the will to Christ.³¹

If a supposed gospel message does not include a call for a radical change of heart and will (as well as mind), it is not true evangelism.

MacArthur does not hesitate to call conversion a "spiritual crisis."

No evangelism that omits the message of repentance can properly be called the gospel, for sinners cannot come to Jesus Christ apart from a radical change of heart, mind and will. That demands a spiritual crisis leading to a complete turnaround and ultimately a wholesale transformation. It is the only kind of conversion Scripture recognizes.³²

³⁰ MacArthur, Gospel, 163.

³¹ MacArthur, Gospel, 164.

³² MacArthur, Gospel, 167.

So for John MacArthur, true saving faith must be far more than mere intellectual assent to propositions. For him true saving faith involves repentance, a radical reorientation of heart and life.³³

Among many evangelicals who have defended MacArthur's position is Stephen G. Hatfield who concludes that Christ's lordship entails acknowledging Him as our owner. "A person cannot profess lordship and at the same time refuse to relinquish control over certain areas of life."³⁴ Hatfield goes on to assert that lordship implies "that the believer lives by the will of God not according to the opinions and judgments of others."³⁵

The lordship controversy has continued well into the 1990s. In 1993, MacArthur published Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles defending and expanding his previous work. This volume engendered another round of comment and controversy.³⁶ While some have tried to establish an intermediate position, no attempt thus far has proven very satisfactory. A characteristic example would be

³³ Another advocate of the lordship position is James Montgomery Boice, who states his view in "The Meaning of Discipleship," Moody Monthly, Feb. 1986, 34-37.

³⁴ Stephen G. Hatfield, "The Lordship of Christ: A Biblical Analysis," Southwestern Journal of Theology 33 (Spring, 1991): 24.

³⁵ Hatfield, 24.

³⁶ See, for example, Lin M. Williams, review of Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles, by John F. MacArthur, Bibliotheca Sacra 150 (Oct.-Dec. 1993): 497-99. Erickson does give some helpful suggestion as to how the discussion should proceed in the future, but to date neither Erickson nor any other evangelical has followed through on the agenda he has proposed. See Erickson, "Lordship Theology," 14.

Robert Saucy's response to MacArthur in JETS.³⁷ While trying to mediate between MacArthur and his strident free grace critic, Earl Radmacher, Saucy ends up endorsing nearly all of MacArthur's viewpoints.

A part of the contribution of this present work will be to explore how a mediating view of faith as trust can be applied to the current lordship controversy. This will be presented in chapter 5.

The Need for Theological Reflection in Evangelical Education

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ry similar tension to the one found in the lordship salvation sts in evangelical educational theory and practice.³⁸ Some emphasize primarily cognitive understanding while others an experiential and interactive methodology which evidences an underlying emphasis on an experiential understanding of faith. On occasion, the specific debate over the nature of faith is directly addressed. For example, Perry Downs argues that a proper understanding of the role of lordship in faith is crucial to the educational task of evangelizing children.

The issue is the nature of saving faith Faith in the biblical sense can never be separated from obedience As we proclaim the good news that Jesus has died for our

³⁷ Saucy, 42-47.

³⁸ Warren S. Benson, "Evangelical Philosophies of Religious Education," in Changing Patterns of Religious Education, ed. Marvin J. Taylor (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984). See also Gary R. Collins, The Rebuilding of Psychology (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1976); Kenneth O. Gangel and Warren S. Benson, Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983); and Carl F. H. Henry, "Restoring the Whole Word for the Whole Community," in The Religious Education We Need, ed. James Michael Lee (Mishawaka, Ind.: Religious Education Press, 1977).

sins according to the Scripture and that he has purchased our redemption with his blood, we must also proclaim that he is Lord Rather than receive him as personal Savior (which is not biblical terminology), we must receive him as Lord, and he will then become our personal Savior.³⁹

More often, divergent views of faith or the relative priority of doctrine and experience are implicitly evident in much of evangelical education. While most evangelical educators would acknowledge that both doctrinal belief and a personal commitment to Christ are important, how these two are to be balanced or integrated is rarely addressed.

A frequently voiced criticism of evangelical education since 1950 has been that evangelical educators do not often step back from their practical work of Christian education to engage in theological reflection. Michael Anthony notes:

Because of differences in terminology, theological concepts are not easy to fit into educational discussions. There doesn't seem to be much of a relationship between the loci of theology and age-graded curriculum or behavioral objectives. As a result, in Christian Education, theology is usually related only to the content of instruction. It is infrequently employed as a guide for Christian Education theory and practice. This is unfortunate, for theology is vitally related to what Christian Education has been, is, and should be.⁴⁰

This lack has also been observed by Jim Wilhoit of Wheaton College.

³⁹ Perry G. Downs, Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 202.

⁴⁰ Michael J. Anthony, "Putting Ministry in Perspective" in Foundations of Ministry, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1992), 24. A recent example of a sophisticated use of insights from the behavioral sciences but with little theological reflection is Mary Ellen Drushal, On Tablets of Human Hearts: Christian Education with Children (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1991).

Theology is crucial to Christian education. Often Christian education has been accused of drifting far from orthodox theological teaching, particularly in regard to the Christian view of human nature and spiritual growth. This drifting is unfortunate, for Christian education is lost unless grounded in biblically based teaching. No matter how much zeal a Christian educator may have, it is of little use without an awareness of the essential theological underpinning of the faith.⁴¹

Rex Johnson argues that churches need to have a clearly articulated philosophy of ministry and lists eight practical advantages.⁴² As R. Michael Harton observes, separating such a philosophy from theological considerations is problematic.

Most writers separate their discussion of theology and philosophy when writing about the foundations of Christian education. This I find very difficult, for a personal philosophy grows out of convictions about the nature and potential of humankind and the end of education. These convictions must grow out of theological presuppositions concerning God, His relationship to the crown of His creation, and humankind's response to and in that relationship. Further, it involves the purpose of our existence and the vehicles for accomplishing that purpose.⁴³

What has not been previously attempted is an evangelical theory of Christian education based on a theory of faith which balances elements of rational assent and passionate commitment.

⁴¹ Jim Wilhoit, Christian Education and the Search for Meaning (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 59-60.

⁴² Rex Johnson, "Philosophical Foundations of Ministry" in Foundations of Ministry, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1992), 55-59.

⁴³ R. Michael Harton, "Importance of Adult Christian Education" in A Church Ministering to Adults, ed. Jerry M. Stubblefield (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1986), 22.

A Theological Reflection on Faith

This project is an exercise in theological reflection around the issue, "What is the nature of faith?" This dissertation constructs an evangelical understanding of faith which integrates the elements of rational assent and passionate commitment. First the two poles of this understanding of faith are explored by an examination of the faith theories of John Locke and Soren Kierkegaard. These figures were chosen because their understandings of faith can exemplify and illuminate the current tensions within evangelicalism. Further, this project demonstrates some implications of this understanding for an evangelical theory of Christian education by critiquing representative figures and then sketching an outline of an evangelical theory of Christian education based on a balanced understanding of faith.

E. J. Carnell's view of faith as trust, critically informed by elements of opposing ideas of faith exemplified by John Locke and Soren Kierkegaard, can supply an understanding of faith that reconciles evangelical rationalistic and experiential polarities, and can provide a basis for proposing a theory of evangelical Christian education. This thesis is demonstrated through an examination of two divergent theories of faith: John Locke's understanding of faith as rationalistic propositional assent and Kierkegaard's view of belief as passionate, personal commitment. It is argued that Locke and Kierkegaard are representative figures and that by exploring their views of faith, strengths and weaknesses can be discerned which can aid in the construction of a balanced view of faith adequate to provide a basis for evangelical education. It is argued that their views represent pure

(and to some extent more extreme) types of the common poles of understanding within contemporary evangelicalism. An examination of their views exposes the tension which is often implicit in evangelical theology and educational theory. It is not argued that Locke and Kierkegaard influenced current evangelicalism, nor that their views are identical to current evangelical theories of faith, rather that their faith theories illuminate the current disparate views of evangelicals.

An integrated understanding of faith is then constructed which includes elements of both Locke and Kierkegaard and also draws on the unifying work of evangelical theologian, E. J. Carnell. Carnell's distinction between general and vital faith and the manner in which general faith is a prerequisite to vital faith is used to sort and select disparate elements in the views of Kierkegaard and Locke.⁴⁴ The work of Carnell is extended and enhanced by the inclusion of elements from the previous theorists. The resulting understanding of faith is then used to critique representative evangelical educational theorists and curricula and also to sketch the outlines of an evangelical theory of Christian education.

Summary

Many evangelicals are dissatisfied with the superficial pragmatism that has characterized evangelical educational theory and practice. Few theorists have attempted to construct a theory of education based on biblical and theological reflection, and none has centered this

⁴⁴ Edward John Carnell, The Case for Orthodox Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), 28-30.

reflection on a theological understanding of the nature of faith. This work proposes a mediate view of faith which gives a balanced emphasis to two crucial poles which distinguish American evangelicalism and demonstrates how this understanding of faith can form a basis for a theory of evangelical education.

CHAPTER 2

The Contribution of Locke and Faith as Mere Assent

There are two errors of imbalance in understanding the nature of faith which evangelicals should avoid when attempting to construct a theory of Christian education. The first error is to understand faith as primarily or exclusively a passionate commitment, existentially divorced from reason. This view as exemplified by Soren Kierkegaard will be examined in Chapter 3. The second error is to reduce religious faith to mere propositional assent. This incomplete view of faith, exemplified by the Protestant philosopher, John Locke, will be examined in this chapter. Specifically this chapter will first examine Locke's view of faith from his own writings, then consider several objections to the interpretation that Locke views faith as mere assent.

Background of John Locke

Locke's Early Life and Education

John Locke (1632-1704) was born at Wrington, Somerset to English Puritan parents.¹ His father, for whom John was named, was a country attorney who fought in the civil war as a Parliamentarian and lost considerable wealth as a result.² Like many of his generation, the younger Locke seems to have rejected the emotionalism which was viewed as the cause of the social upheaval. Aaron observes:

¹ Richard I. Aaron, John Locke (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1937), 2.

² Samuel Alexander, Locke (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1908), 3.

Late seventeenth-century England abhorred the emotionalism of the Civil War period. It might tolerate and even welcome a measure of emotional appeal in poetry and literature, meant "for entertainment" only. But in the serious things of life, religion, politics, and above all in the inquiry into truth in philosophy and science, no appeal to the feelings was to be permitted.³

Locke's upbringing, like that of most young men in Puritan England, was rigorous and disciplined.

[I]n his boyhood Locke knew the severe discipline of a Puritan home. He was trained to sobriety, industry, and endeavor; he was made to love simplicity and to hate excessive ornament and display.⁴

But the senior Locke's severity seems to have been lovingly administered and to have resulted in lifelong friendship and affection between father and son.

His father educated him with great care, treating him with rigor as a child, but admitting him to friendship as he grew up,—a practice which Locke approves. A letter to his father is preserved which testifies to the tenderness Locke felt for him.⁵

At age 14, Locke entered Westminster School, where the bulk of his education consisted of reading the Classics in original languages. The curriculum of the school

was confined almost wholly to the study of the Classics. In the upper forms there would be, in addition, Hebrew and Arabic and some elementary geography, but the staple fare of the school was endless Greek and Latin exercises. Locke thus became thoroughly acquainted with the

³ Aaron, 1.

⁴ Aaron, 2.

⁵ Alexander, 3. Aaron concurs that Locke felt great affection for his father. "There is sufficient testimony to it in letters from Locke to his father written many years later when his father's health was broken. These are full of tenderness and affection." See Aaron, 2.

Classics, an acquaintance which stood him in good stead later.⁶

In 1652, Locke proceeded to Christchurch, Oxford, receiving a bachelor's degree in 1656 and a Master's in 1658.⁷ Locke did not find the course of study at either institution to his liking. In later years, he criticized the traditional classical method.

[H]e was sent, probably in 1646, to Westminster School, then under the government of the famous Dr. Richard Busby, and was there put through an incessant drilling in Greek and Latin, which may have made Locke the good scholar he was, but may also explain the depreciation which he afterwards . . . expressed for such exercises.⁸

Likewise he found the classical approach at Oxford wasteful.

Locke would probably devote a year to rhetoric and grammar, another to logic and moral philosophy, the third and fourth being given to logic, moral philosophy, geometry, and Greek. As might be expected, he found this course both insipid and dreary. He later complained to Leclerc that "he lost a great deal of time at the commencement of his studies because the only philosophy then known at Oxford was the peripatetic, perplexed with obscure terms and useless questions."⁹

Although friends encouraged him toward ministry, Locke pursued medicine although he never practiced professionally.¹⁰ He did, during several periods of his life, serve as a diplomat which in turn led to a prudent self-chosen exile in Holland from 1683 until the Revolution of

⁶ Aaron, 3.

⁷ Aaron, 5.

⁸ Alexander, 3.

⁹ Aaron, 5.

¹⁰ Aaron, 6.

1688.¹¹ Locke never really did settle on a particular profession. As Wilburn summarizes:

Locke could not properly be said to have had a single career, for in the usual senses, he was never a political, or an academician, or a scientist, though the fields of politics, science, and of learning in general occupied his life.¹²

Background of Locke's Writings on Faith

It was from this context of political controversy, a rigorous training in language and logic, and antipathy for emotionalism, that Locke produced An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Locke himself gives a partial account of its origin in his introductory, "Epistle to the Reader."

[F]ive or six friends meeting at my chamber and discoursing on a subject very remote from this, found themselves quickly at a stand, by the difficulties that rose on every side. After we had awhile puzzled ourselves, without coming any nearer a resolution of those doubts which perplexed us, it came into my thoughts that we took a wrong course; and that before we set ourselves upon inquires of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understandings were, or were not, fitted to deal with.¹³

This passage is intriguing, because Locke never directly states what the "subject very remote from" the subject of the Essay was. Ramsey

¹¹ I. T. Ramsey, editor's introduction to The Reasonableness of Christianity: with A Discourse of Miracles and part of A Third Letter Concerning Toleration, by John Locke (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1958), 7.

¹² Raymond Wilburn, introduction to An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, by John Locke (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1947), ix.

¹³ John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. Raymond Wilburn (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1947), xxi. Hereafter this work will be referred to as Essay.

↑ by Locke

asserts that the original question concerned the rationality of religious belief.

One of these friends, a certain James Tyrrell, in a manuscript note in his copy of the Essay (now in the British Museum) tells us that the friends were discussing "the principles of morality and revealed religion." We may think that so far as religion went the difficulty was that "hard or misapplied words, with little or no meaning, have, by prescription, such a right to be mistaken for deep learning and height of speculation, that it will not be easy to persuade either those who speak or those who hear them, that they are but the covers of ignorance, and hindrance of true knowledge." Against such pretensions and hindrances Locke's aim was "to break in upon this sanctuary of vanity and ignorance" and more positively "to inquire into the origins, certainty, and extent of human knowledge." What in particular could be reasonably believed about the Christian faith? How far and in what way could there be genuine knowledge about religion?¹⁴

If Ramsey is correct, then the overall purpose of the Essay was to lay a general epistemic framework within which to answer the question, what is the relationship between faith and reason? As the Essay came to be in its final form,¹⁵ Locke spends 65 sections (17 chapters out of a total of 21) answering foundational questions before he deals specifically with the nature of religious faith in chapter 18.¹⁶

In the Essay, prior to dealing with the nature of faith, Locke considers the nature of innate notions, ideas, words, and finally, of knowledge. Near the end of Book IV, Chapter XVII (entitled "Of

¹⁴ Ramsey, 9.

¹⁵ Locke produced four editions of the Essay during his lifetime.

¹⁶ Locke argues in Chapter 10 of Book IV that we can have certain knowledge that God exists. He arrives at this conclusion through variations of the cosmological and teleological arguments. He also deals with religion in Chapter 18, "Of Enthusiasm."

Reason”), Locke distinguishes between three kinds of propositions and their relation to reason.

By what has been before said of reason, we may be able to make some guess at the distinction of things into those that are according to, above, and contrary to reason.

1. According to reason are such propositions, whose truth we can discover by examining and tracing those ideas we have from sensation and reflection and by natural deduction find to be true or probable. 2. Above reason are such propositions, whose truth or probability we cannot by reason derive from those principles. 3. Contrary to reason are such propositions, as are inconsistent with, or irreconcilable to, our clear and distinct ideas. Thus the existence of one God is according to reason; the existence of more than one God contrary to reason; the resurrection of the dead above reason.¹⁷

So for Locke, any proposition may either be capable of being rationally determined true or false or else fall in the second category (above reason) where its truth or probability cannot be rationally determined. It is in the context of these three possible relations between propositions and reason that Locke elucidates the nature of religious faith.

Locke’s View of Faith

In An Essay Concerning Human Understanding and The Reasonableness of Christianity, John Locke proposes a view of religious faith which gives a clear priority to reason but preserves a significant role for faith based on revelation. In this context, Locke defines faith as bare assent.

¹⁷ John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. Alexander C. Fraser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), 414.

The Relation of Faith and Reason in Locke

Locke clearly distinguishes between faith and reason in statements which occur near the beginning of Book 4 Chapter 18 of the Essay. Reason is assent to any proposition the truth of which can be determined with certainty or probability by means of the exercise of natural human faculties.

Reason therefore here, as contradistinguished to faith, I take to be the discovery of the certainty or probability of such propositions or truths, which the mind arrives at by deduction made from such ideas which it has got by the use of its natural faculties, viz. by sensation or reflection.¹⁸

Faith, for Locke, is assent to a proposition which is taken to have come from God by means of revelation.¹⁹

Faith, on the other side, is the assent to any proposition, not thus made out by the deductions of reason; but upon the credit of the proposer, as coming from God, in some extraordinary way of communication. This way of discovering truths to men we call revelation.²⁰

Locke identifies three situations which may occur and delineates the proper roles for faith and reason in each. The first situation occurs when reason (through the operations of sensation or reflection) can discover with certainty the truth or falsity of a particular proposition. The second situation involves any instance where reason can only predict the probability that a proposition is true or false. The third situation is where reason cannot determine truth or falsity at all.

¹⁸ Locke, Essay, 416.

¹⁹ Locke, Essay, 416.

²⁰ Locke, Essay, 416.

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¹⁸ Locke, Essay, 416. In this Chapter, all future references to this work

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Locke's view of the respective roles of faith and reason in each of these instances will now be examined.

Rational Certainty

In this realm, faith should have no part because reason is a surer way of knowing. For Locke, faith was the acceptance of propositions derived from revelation but certain knowledge could be derived only from the senses and reason.

In all things of this kind there is little need or use of revelation, God having furnished us with natural and surer means to arrive at the knowledge of them. For whatsoever truth we come to the clear discovery of, from the knowledge and contemplation of our own ideas, will always be certain to us than those which are conveyed to us by traditional revelation.²¹

Consequently, since reason can sometimes arrive at conclusions with certainty whereas those ideas which come from traditional revelation must have the mediation of reason, reason must supersede supposed revelation whenever the results of reason are certain.²²

But yet nothing, I think, can, under that title [revelation], shake or overrule plain knowledge; or rationally prevail with any man to admit it for true, in a direct contradiction to the clear evidence of his own understanding.²³

²¹ Locke, Essay, 418. ed. ?,
✓

²² Locke distinguishes between traditional revelation (that which is heard second hand) and original revelation (the first impression made by God on a human mind). Locke does not place reason above original revelation (for the original recipient). On that immediate impression, Locke says, "we cannot set any bounds." See Locke, Essay, 417.

²³ Locke, Essay, 420. ed. ?,
✓

For Locke this must be so or else "the principles and foundations of all knowledge, evidence and assent" would be subverted.²⁴ Locke offers the example of St. Paul when he was caught up into the third heaven. Since his hearers had no frame of reference for the sights or ideas Paul received, he can only give them a negative communication of their incomprehensibility to any who was not the direct recipient of this revelation.

Thus whatever things were discovered to St. Paul, when he was rapt up into the third heaven, whatever new ideas his mind there received, all the description he can make to other of that place is only this, that there are such things, "as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive."²⁵

So the first instance is a case where reason is certain. In this instance, reason takes precedence over the supposed assertions of faith.

Rational Probability

In this realm, faith may supersede the merely "probable conjectures of reason." Here Locke allows faith in revealed truth to countermand our assent to propositions, even if reason has made such propositions seem quite probably true. In one sense, what Locke is really doing here is weighing one sort of reason against another. There is the reason which (unaided by revelation) can only conclude a matter probable. Against this is reason judging that a particular revelation is from God and therefore to be given assent.

²⁴ Locke, Essay, 421.

²⁵ Locke, Essay, 417.

ed. n.
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Because the mind not being certain of the truth of that it does not evidently know, but only yielding to the probability that appears in it, is bound to give up its assent to such a testimony which, it is satisfied, comes from one who cannot err, and will not deceive.²⁶

It should be noted that reason is, for Locke, still the final arbiter both in deciding what is an authentic divine revelation and in determining the proper interpretation of the words of the revelation. "But yet, it still belongs to reason to judge of the truth of its being a revelation, and of the signification of the words wherein it is delivered."²⁷

Rational Indeterminacy

This is proper realm for the primacy of faith. These are matters over which we cannot have any knowledge (or at least very little) by means of our natural faculties. These are matters Locke declares to be "above reason" and "the proper matter of faith."²⁸ These are matters which, "being beyond the discovery of reason, are purely matters of faith, with which reason has directly nothing to do."²⁹

Locke gives two brief examples: those angels who rebelled against God and were condemned, and the resurrection of the dead. Both of these (and many others, Locke alludes) "are purely matters of faith, with which reason has directly nothing to do."³⁰

²⁶ Locke, Essay, 423.

²⁷ Locke, Essay, 425.

²⁸ Locke, Essay, 423.

²⁹ Locke, Essay, 423.

³⁰ Locke, Essay, 423.

For Locke, then, there are three possible situations with regard to the proper operation of faith and reason: rational certainty where faith should have no part; rational probability where a rational faith may supersede the probable conclusions of natural reason; and rational indeterminacy where faith alone must decide.

But reason has a kind of overarching role even in the instance of rational indeterminacy.

Whatever God hath revealed, is certainly true; no doubt can be made of it. This is the proper object of faith: but whether it be a divine revelation or no, reason must judge.³¹

So even in the instance where revelation asserts a proposition which reason has no way to directly confirm or deny (such as the fate of angels), reason still can judge the revelation itself.³² This understanding of religious faith and its relation to reason is made more explicit in The Reasonableness of Christianity.

Faith as Assent to Revelation

For John Locke, "faith" is believing to be true, is true. Locke says that Abi
a firm belief of what God declared to hi
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³¹ Locke, Essay, 424.

³² Locke does not here offer any hint of what the criteria might be for judging a revelation as a whole. However in a later work, A Discourse of Miracles, he proposes that reason can confirm the Christian revelation, the Bible, by the miracles performed by Christ.

³³ John Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1958), 31-32.

in Christ" is "believing that Jesus was the Messiah."³⁴ In answering the objection that this sort of "historical faith" could not be "saving faith," Locke argues that the faith necessary for salvation is nothing more than assent to the proposition that Jesus was the Messiah.³⁵

Locke then takes up the possible objection that this could not be saving faith since this is exactly the sort of "faith" the devils had (implying that, if this were saving faith, then devils would also be saved). Locke's first answer to this objection is that no sort of faith could have saved devils since the offer of salvation was made only to humanity, never to devils. By this line of argument, Locke makes it clear he believes that the sort of intellectual assent which devils had concerning the proposition, "Jesus is the Messiah" is exactly what Locke means by faith.³⁶

There is one additional aspect of Locke's understanding of faith which will be important to our construction of a view of faith as an adequate basis for a theory of evangelical education. That aspect is the role miracles play in confirming the validity of a supposed revelation.

³⁴ Locke, Reasonableness, 31-32. Although Locke does not specifically distinguish "believing that" from "believing in," he is advocating a definition of faith which is rationalistic rather than fideistic.

³⁵ Locke, Reasonableness, 31-32. Locke lists a second condition of salvation which he calls "repentance" but he makes it clear that repentance is not included in faith but rather a separate condition of salvation.

³⁶ Locke, Reasonableness, 44. It should be noted that Locke goes on to give another reason why devils cannot be saved: they do not meet the second condition of the covenant of grace--repentance.

In his brief essay, A Discourse of Miracles, Locke begins by defining what he means by the term, miracle.

A miracle then I take to be a sensible operation, which, being above the comprehension of the spectator, and in his opinion contrary to the established course of nature, is taken by him to be divine.³⁷

After answering several possible objections to this definition, Locke turns to the role miracles play in confirming the truth of revealed religion.

To know that any revelation is from God, it is necessary to know that the messenger that delivers it is sent from God, and that cannot be known but by some credential given him by God himself. Let us see then whether miracles, in my sense, be not such credentials, and will not infallibly direct us right in the search of divine revelation.³⁸

Locke then argues that we really do not have a large number of messengers who claim to come from the one true God and also are accompanied by confirming miracles.

Of such who have come in the name of the one only true God, professing to bring a law from him, we have in history a clear account but of three, viz. Moses, Jesus and Mohomet.³⁹

So we really only have three serious contenders for revealers of God who might be confirmed by miracles.⁴⁰ Locke continues his argument:

³⁷ Locke, Reasonableness, 79.

³⁸ Locke, Reasonableness, 80.

³⁹ Locke, Reasonableness, 81. Locke has already dismissed all polytheistic religions since, he asserts, pagans are free to worship many gods and therefore have no need of miracles to confirm the validity of one over another. See Locke, Reasonableness, 80.

⁴⁰ It should be remembered that Locke holds that the existence of a creator God and even the nature of many theistic attributes can be

Now of the three before-mentioned, Mohomet having none to produce, pretends to no miracles for the vouching of his mission; so that the only revelations that come attested by miracles, being only those of Moses and Christ, and they confirming each other, the business of miracles, as it stands really in matter of fact, has no manner of difficulty in it; and I think the most scrupulous or skeptical cannot from miracles raise the least doubt against the divine revelation of the gospel.⁴¹

To modern ears, including those of most evangelicals, Locke's confidence that he has so facilely established the status of Christianity (and Judaism) as exclusive purveyors of genuine revelation seems naive. However, what is of importance for the present work is not whether Locke's argument succeeds or fails. Of paramount interest here is the role miracles play in Locke's epistemology of faith.

It may be remembered that in the Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Locke offered no criteria by which one might judge between two supposed revelations, or how one might judge the validity of a revelation which contains assertions which are "beyond reason." Here in the Discourse, he has given us such a criterion. Locke can believe in the biblical account of the fate of rebellious angels, even though this is a subject about which reason, per se, can make no judgment, because the miracles of Jesus (and to a lesser degree, Moses) rationally confirm the status of the revelation as a whole. A rational faith can give assent to propositions concerning things about which reason could otherwise make no judgment or even

established with certainty by reason, unaided by revelation. This is undoubtedly why he feels justified in so quickly narrowing the field to the three major, Western monotheistic religions.

⁴¹ Locke, Reasonableness, 81.

where unaided reason would make a probabilistic contrary judgment, because faith rests on the secure foundation of miracles.

Locke adds a significant nuance to his understanding of the role of miracles in the epistemology of faith in A Third Letter Concerning Toleration. In Chapter 10, Locke is refuting the theory that after miracles ceased in the early centuries of the Christian era, the force of the state became necessary for Christianity to prevail. He argues that Christianity prevailed and spread to those who were not eyewitness to the miraculous without the intervention of the state.

The greatest part then, of those, who were converted, at least in some of those ages before Christianity was supported by the laws of the empire, I think you must allow, were wrought upon, by bare preaching, and such miracles as we still have, miracles at a distance, related miracles.⁴²

In other words, miracles can have legitimate persuasive force even to those who did not witness them first hand; who have only been told about them or read about them.

This is an important clarification. Without it, it is difficult to understand how miracles (such as those of Jesus) could be the basis of faith in our present time. The reports of the miracles in the Bible become a crucial part of the reasonableness of Christianity.

So that I think you will, upon second thoughts, not deny, but that the true religion is able to prevail now, as it did at first, and has done since in many places, without assistance from the powers in being, by its own beauty, force and reasonableness, whereof well-attested miracles is a part.⁴³

⁴² Locke, Reasonableness, 91.

⁴³ Locke, Reasonableness, 92.

This aspect of Locke's understanding of the relation between faith and reason will become important as a reconstructed view of faith is proposed as a basis for a theory of evangelical education.

So Locke views faith as mere assent to propositions. Saving faith is assent to a particular proposition, that Jesus is the Messiah. It is rational to give assent to this proposition, in part, because of the well-attested miracles performed by Christ, which authenticate Him as a divine revealer of truth.

Objections to Viewing Locke's Faith as Mere Assent

Does Locke's Faith Include Repentance?

Not all scholars agree that Locke understands faith as mere intellectual assent. Samuel C. Pearson, Jr. argues that faith, for Locke, includes repentance, the dimension of moral commitment.

While Locke defines faith in the Essay as assent to propositions coming from God and Christian faith in the Reasonableness as belief that Jesus was the Messiah, the starkly propositional and rationalistic character of such definitions belies their adequacy to convey the meaning of the experience of faith. Though attracted by the simplicity and rationality of such definitions, Locke clearly indicates in the Reasonableness that by faith he means more than simple assent to a proposition.⁴⁴

Pearson elaborates that Locke's response to the objection that devils also believe in Jesus as Messiah demonstrates that Locke saw repentance included as an aspect of faith. "Locke responds that repentance, lacking in the devils, 'is as absolute a condition of the

⁴⁴ Samuel C. Pearson, Jr., "The Religion of John Locke and the Character of His Thought," Journal of Religion 58 (1978): 255.

covenant of grace as faith; and as necessary to be performed as that."⁴⁵

But just prior to the phrase Pearson quotes, Locke argues that "[devils] could not be saved by the covenant of grace; because they performed not the other condition required in it, altogether as necessary to be performed as this of believing: and that is repentance"(emphasis added).⁴⁶

Locke is trying to establish that there is another condition of salvation in addition to faith (or believing); this condition is repentance. Pearson has missed the significance of the final two words he quotes. Locke says that repentance is "as necessary as that." In the context, Locke means repentance is as necessary as faith.

Stephen S. N. Williams correctly summarizes Locke's true position when he specifies that, "belief is not the sufficient condition for becoming a Christian--it suffices as belief, but it must be accompanied by obedient repentance."⁴⁷ Therefore, for Locke, repentance is not an aspect of faith; rather it is an additional condition of salvation.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Pearson, 255.

⁴⁶ Locke, Reasonableness, 44.

⁴⁷ Stephen S. N. Williams, "John Locke on the Status of Faith," Scottish Journal of Theology 40 (1987): 602.

⁴⁸ Many have echoed the view that Locke saw faith and repentance as two separate conditions of salvation, including John Dunn, Locke (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984), 85; and Kathleen M. Squadrito, John Locke (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), 73.

Two Views of Faith in Locke?

Another objection to viewing Locke's definition of faith as mere assent might be that Locke altered his view by the time he wrote

→ ~~A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity.~~

Dewey D. Wallace, Jr. argues that in the Second Vindication, Locke distinguishes between two types of faith. "There he noted that while faith first means 'a bare assent to any proposition,' there is also an 'evangelical faith,' which is 'an active principle of life, a faith working by love and obedience.'" ⁴⁹ This raises two questions: are there two types of faith in the Second Vindication and, if so, does this invalidate the view that Locke defines faith as mere assent? The answer to the first question is yes; the second, no.

As part of his defense against the criticisms of Cambridge scholar and Anglican Calvinist John Edwards, ⁵⁰ in the Second Vindication Locke does define two types of faith. Locke differentiates between

faith, in a strict sense, as it is a bare assent to any proposition, and that which is called evangelical faith, in a larger sense of the word; which comprehends under it something more than a bare simple assent. ⁵¹

⁴⁹ Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., "Socinianism, Justification by Faith and the Sources of John Locke's The Reasonableness of Christianity", Journal of the History of Ideas 45 (1984): 55.

⁵⁰ John Edwards (1637-1716) should not be confused with Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), the American Calvinist philosopher-theologian.

⁵¹ John Locke, A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity (London, 1697). Reprinted in The Works of John Locke (London, 1823), 7:285-86.

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What Locke means by the "first kind of faith" is clear; mere assent to any proposition. His definition of the second type of faith is more problematic.

Locke obviously believes he has made his definitions unequivocal, but in reality they are far from unambiguous. Consider his commentary in the Second Vindication on several passages from the Reasonableness.

By these, and more, the like passages in my book, my meaning is so evident, that nobody, but an unmasker, would have said, that when I spoke of believing, as a bare speculative assent to any proposition, as true, I affirmed that was all that was required of a Christian for justification: though that, in the strict sense of the word, is all that is done in believing. And therefore, I say, as far as mere believing could make them members of Christ's body; plainly signifying, as much as words can, that the faith, for which they were justified, included something more than a bare assent.⁵²

What does Locke want to include that is "more than a bare assent" in this evangelical faith? He nowhere answers this question unambiguously, however the two most likely answers are either: repentance (which includes a sincere effort to follow God's moral law) or else trust in Christ for salvation. It seems most likely that Locke was simply reiterating as evangelical faith his dual requirements for salvation: mere assent and repentance.

It is worth noting that Locke quotes a part of Edwards' complaint against him that for there to exist a completely orthodox Christianity "to this practical assent and choice, there must be added, likewise, a

⁵² Locke, Second Vindication in Works, 7:286.

firm trust and reliance in the blessed author of our salvation."⁵³ While it is possible that Locke intended his lengthy remonstrations to include an endorsement of this note of trust in Christ for salvation, this interpretation seems unwarranted, since Locke never clearly advocates terms such as "trust" or "reliance" as conditions of salvation.⁵⁴ As Wallace affirms, in Locke "faith is reduced to the acceptance of propositions as true rather than being, as it was in Reformation theology, a trusting acceptance of the sufficiency of Christ's righteousness."⁵⁵ Wallace is alluding to a personal reception of salvation that goes beyond intellectual assent to propositions such as, "Christ is Messiah" or even, "Christ's righteousness is the only means of salvation." Although Locke does advocate the additional step of repentance, he does not, strictly speaking, include any commitment of the will in his definition of faith.

So for John Locke, faith does not, in its essence, involve personal trust, commitment, or any other volitional aspect; it is (minimally) mere intellectual assent to the truth of propositions believed to have been

⁵³ John Edwards, The Socinian Creed: Or a Brief Account of the Professed Tenants and Doctrines of the Foreign and English Socinians. Quoted in Locke, Works, 7:287.

⁵⁴ The closest Locke comes is when he says, "'To make him to be our King,' carries with it a right disposition of the will to honour and obey him, joined to that assent wherewith believers embrace this fundamental truth, that Jesus was the person who was by God sent to be their King; he that was promised to be their Prince and Saviour." Locke, Second Vindication, in Works, 7:286.

⁵⁵ Wallace, 56.

revealed by God or (in its broadest sense) bare assent plus a sincere attempt to act morally.

Does Locke Place Faith Above Reason?

Thus far, this discussion has proceeded on the assumption that Locke places reason above faith because the conclusions of reason can be certain but those of faith only probable. Although this view has been the majority position of Locke scholars since the Reasonableness was first published, it has recently been challenged by Richard Ashcraft. Ashcraft argues that most scholars have completely misunderstood the Reasonableness; it was not written "to indicate the 'vulgarness' of Christianity, but in order to demonstrate that, ultimately, philosophy fails" to answer the most crucial questions which concern all humanity.⁵⁶ Ashcraft contends that Locke thinks we have certain knowledge about very little: "our own existence, of God's existence, of mathematical propositions, and very little else."⁵⁷ Consequently faith can overrule any other human knowledge, since it would be of the merely probable sort.

At the same time, Locke willingly grants that revelation can and should take precedence over our 'probable' knowledge. (Essay, IV, XVIII, 8, 10) But since almost everything we 'know' falls under this category,⁵⁸ Locke's concession is no small triumph for revelation.

⁵⁶ Richard Ashcraft, "Faith and Knowledge in Locke's Philosophy," in John Locke: Problems and Perspectives, ed. John W. Yolton (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1969), 218-19.

⁵⁷ Ashcraft, 217.

⁵⁸ Ashcraft, 217.

Although some aspects of Ashcraft's analysis of Locke are correct, his overall conclusion--that Locke elevates faith above reason--is flawed. Ashcraft is right that, for Locke, those things which can be known with certainty are limited,⁵⁹ and that all other human knowledge is merely probable. He is also right that Locke believes that faith may sometimes overrule the (merely probable) conclusions of reason.

Ashcraft's conclusion is flawed in two ways: first, he overlooks the fact that probable reason may also overrule (probable) faith and second, Ashcraft ignores the role reason plays in the establishment of faith. Ashcraft's argument hinges on Locke's statements that probable knowledge should yield to assent to revelation. Locke says that in the case of "the mind not being certain" but "only yielding to the probability" it is "bound to give up its assent to such a testimony which, it is satisfied, comes from one who cannot err" (emphasis added).⁶⁰ It is important to note the distinction Locke makes here between the conclusions of probabilistic reason, of which the mind is "not certain" and "only yielding to probability" in contrast to the information received by faith about which the mind "is satisfied." It seems likely that Locke was envisioning a situation where the conclusions of reason were less probable than the likelihood that the revelation was genuine. Locke does not directly address a situation where the conclusions of

⁵⁹ Although it is not, perhaps, as limited as Ashcraft thinks. For example, Pearson thinks Locke believed we could know the principles of morality with absolute certainty. See Pearson, 249-50.

⁶⁰ Locke, Reasonableness, 425.

reason were more probable than the conclusion that a purported revelation was genuine, but his understanding of faith as a probabilistic judgment would seem to necessitate this eventuality. Neither does Locke ever give any clear criteria by which one could judge if a putative revelation were authentic. John Yolton notes:

What is lacking from Locke's account of the proper domains of reason and faith is any indication of what the marks are which, in traditional revelation, reason can take as genuine criteria of a revelation. He appears to side-step this issue.⁶¹

Locke does accept the biblical account of Jesus as true but he never makes clear how he arrived at that conclusion or (more importantly) how one could test a potentially fraudulent revelation. As Yolton concludes: "Locke's reason, by principles and criteria not specified, convinced him that he should assent to the New Testament story as true revelation."⁶² But it does not follow, as Ashcraft seems to assume it must, that because Locke assigned a high probability to the proposition that the New Testament was true revelation, that Locke therefore is setting all revelation above all probabilistic conclusions of reason. Let us suppose Locke thought there was a decent, but not overwhelming, case for a purported revelation (document X) such that it was probable that X was authentic, but not highly probable. Let us further suppose that X contains the claim that Alexander the Great died at age 75. If Locke were to be consistent with his

⁶¹ John W. Yolton, Locke: An Introduction (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 87.

⁶² Yolton, 91.

other statements, it would seem he would give assent to the common historical teaching that Alexander died at 33. He would do this because the historical conclusion (though only probable) was more likely than the likelihood that X was a genuine revelation and therefore could not err. Thus, in this imaginary instance, Locke would be placing the probabilistic conclusions of reason above the (less likely) probabilistic conclusions of faith.

The second objection to Ashcraft's conclusion that Locke places faith higher than reason is that Ashcraft fails to account for the central and dominant role that reason plays even in faith. Locke insists that whenever one is dealing with a purported revelation, reason is the "judge of the truth of its being a revelation" as well as the agency for interpreting what is revealed.⁶³ And for Locke this role of interpretation reason must play is not an easy or trivial one, but rather is fraught with difficulty, as J. T. Moore notes.

What was originally true and understandable may never be understood or accepted as true at a later time simply because it has been told and retold until its original truth and meaning are lost. In "traditional," says Locke, each remove from the original weakens the force of the proof. The more hands the tradition has passed through, "the less strength and evidence" it receives from them.⁶⁴

⁶³ Locke, Essay, 425. In his "Essay on Infallibility," Locke makes it clear that humans neither need nor have any infallible interpreter of scripture. Fallible human reason, both that of the individual and of Church leaders, is all that is needed. John Locke, "Essay on Infallibility," John C. Biddle, trans. Journal of Church and State 19 (1977): 316-27.

⁶⁴ J. T. Moore, "Locke's Analysis of Language and the Assent to Scripture," Journal of the History of Ideas 37 (1976): 707-14.

So epistemically, reason is prior to and more basic than faith since, for Locke, faith must doubly depend upon reason: both for evidence that the revelation to be believed is authentic and for interpretation once the source is accepted.

The ultimate problem for Ashcraft's revisionist reading of Locke is that Ashcraft has failed to discern the subtle but decisive epistemic gulf Locke has placed between faith and reason. Reason can, in some instances, lead to absolute knowledge; faith can, at best, lead to belief.⁶⁵ Dunn concurs: "Judgment and faith may be sufficient for salvation. But what they offer does not amount to a form of knowledge."⁶⁶ And even in the realm of belief, reason is the necessary prerequisite to the assent of faith.

It has been argued in this chapter that for John Locke, faith is mere assent to propositions derived from revelation and is epistemically inferior to, and continually dependent upon, reason. However, even if the view is taken that Locke did include repentance in his understanding of faith, or that he modified his view in the heat of controversy, the issues raised by Locke's assertions and the debate they aroused can serve to illumine the current evangelical understanding of faith.

⁶⁵ David C. Snyder, "Faith and Reason in Locke's *Essay*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47 (1986): 204.

⁶⁶ Dunn, 85.

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Lockean Tendencies in Contemporary Evangelicalism

In Chapter 1 it was shown that those on the free grace side of the current lordship debate, exemplified by Zane Hodges, understand faith as giving assent or accepting as true certain propositions found in the Bible. Although Hodges and Locke might differ as to which propositions require assent for salvation, their basic understanding of faith is remarkably similar.⁶⁷ Both have what could be properly labeled a rationalistic view of faith. Locke and these modern evangelicals emphasize both the way one believes (with the mind) and that it matters supremely what one believes. Evangelism, or the effort to help another become a Christian, would then primarily consist of doing whatever might be necessary to help individuals understand the central Christian proposition(s) and accept them as true.⁶⁸

There are additional similarities between Locke's view and that of the modern free grace proponents. For Locke, a rational basis for belief was the authenticated miracles of Jesus. For many evangelicals, such as Ryrie and Hodges, the historical evidence and arguments for the resurrection of Christ are a legitimate ground for the beliefs

⁶⁷ As has been shown in this chapter, for Locke one only had to give assent to one proposition, that Jesus is the Messiah. Modern evangelical free grace proponents would likely require assent that Jesus is divine, that He died for sins, and bodily rose from the dead.

⁶⁸ There is also an educational implication in this view. To the extent that it is the job of Christian education to lead children and adults to Christ, a central educational task would be to explain doctrines concerning Christ and/or give convincing evidence that they are true. This emphasis on content over experience will be explored more fully in the final chapter of this work.

necessary for salvation. Just as Locke's critics charged that his view of faith lacked a proper emphasis on repentance, so those in the lordship camp have charged that the free grace view condones immorality through failing to include repentance as a necessary part of saving faith.

While Hodges never bluntly and clearly states that faith is nothing more than mere assent to propositions, what he does say about his view, especially seen in the light of the clear assertions of Locke in Reasonableness, is very close to that of Locke.⁶⁹ The controversy which Locke aroused and the great effort he marshaled to defend against charges of unorthodoxy may hold a clue to why MacArthur's condemnation of the free grace view has engendered such response in the evangelical world. The ways in which this Locke-like view can be balanced by the inclusion of passionate commitment as an element of faith will be explored in following chapters.

Summary

Locke asserted that faith was mere assent to propositions. In response to his critics Locke attempted to delineate the relationship between this understanding and the idea of repentance. Locke also proposed that miracles could be a reasonable basis for Christian faith. These ideas have been argued in a similar fashion by the free grace

⁶⁹ As was noted in Chapter 1, Hodges balks at his critics classifying his view as "mental assent." However he has never explained how his view involves more than mere assent. It would seem that Hodges is trying to avoid the negative connotations of the term, not the substance.

adherents in the current evangelical controversy over the nature of saving faith.

Chapter 3

The Contribution of Kierkegaard and Faith as Passionate Commitment

Just as viewing faith as mere propositional assent is not an adequate foundation for building a theory of evangelical education, so too, seeing faith as exclusively, or even predominantly, passionate commitment does not provide a balanced base. This view of faith, as exemplified by Soren Kierkegaard, will be examined in this chapter, along with other interpretations of Kierkegaard's understanding of faith. The crucial aspects of this view will then be explored for their value as elements of a balanced view for constructing an evangelical theory of education based on faith as trust.

Background of Soren Kierkegaard

Soren Abby Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was the son of a wealthy Lutheran, Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard.¹ It is frequently suggested that the melancholy temperament of his father was a major source of Kierkegaard's own tortured emotions. Louis Dupre maintains that, "it is certain that the influences of Kierkegaard's childhood were responsible for the tensions in his personality."² Elmer Duncan traces Soren's anguish to his father Michael early life as a poor shepherd boy in the parish of Saeding, Jutland.

¹ Colin Brown, "Kierkegaard, Soren Abby," in New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. J. D. Douglas, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1978, 565-66. See also Elmer H. Duncan, Soren Kierkegaard, (Waco, Tx.: Word Books, 1976), 17.

² Louis Dupre, Kierkegaard as Theologian: The Dialectic of Christian Existence (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 5.

The life of a shepherd on the frozen heaths of Jutland must have been cold and hard. One night, young Michael gave vent to his anger and frustration by cursing God. This event cannot be overemphasized, for Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard was convinced that he had committed the unpardonable sin. A hard life often produces a hard and unyielding religion; the elder Kierkegaard thought of God as "by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" (Num. 14:18). Kierkegaard's father had a deep sense of guilt and sorrow, which never left him, though he lived to be eighty-two. This he passed on to his sons.³

Whether it was Soren's knowledge (or suspicion) of this sin of his father or some other,⁴ the attitude of Michael Kierkegaard seems to have cast a pall over the home.

Despite the material comfort a somber atmosphere prevailed the household. Old Mikael was given to brooding as if a sinister event of his past life weighed heavily upon him. His melancholy reached a climax when, during a two-year period, his wife and all but two of his seven children died. From this time on he devoted himself the religious education of his youngest son. His ideas of sin and penance has such an effect on the child that even as an adult Soren could not think of these years without a shudder.⁵

Tragedy did seem to haunt the steps of the elder Kierkegaard. His first wife died leaving him no children. Soon after, Michael married the household servant, who bore him seven children during the next 16 years. Soren's birth was unexpected as his mother was then 45

³ Elmer H. Duncan, Soren Kierkegaard (Waco, Tx.: Word Books, 1976), 18-19

⁴ Lowrie does not seem as certain as Duncan that we can determine the nature of Michael's guilty secret. See Walter Lowrie, A Short Life of Kierkegaard (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1942), 70-76.

⁵ Dupre, 4.

years old and his father, 56.⁶ Then Soren's mother and all of his siblings but one died in a period of two years.

Kierkegaard never married. He deeply loved and was engaged to marry a young woman named Regina Olsen. Kierkegaard broke the engagement for reasons that he never made clear. Walter Lowrie suggests that Kierkegaard left an explanation in his Journals.

"When the child has to be weaned the mother blackens the breast, but her eyes rest just as lovingly upon the child. The child believes it is the breast that has changed, but that the mother is unchanged. And why does she blacken her breast? Because, she says, it would be a shame that it should seem delicious when the child must not get it.--This collision is easily resolved, for the breast is only a part of the mother herself."⁷

Kierkegaard compares the mother who is cruel out of kindness to a situation that may describe his own in choosing to break the engagement to Regina.

"Happy is he who has not experienced more dreadful collisions, who did not need to blacken himself, who did not need to go to hell in order to see what the devil looks like, so that he might paint himself accordingly and in that way if possible save another person in that person's God-relationship at least. This would be Abraham's collision."⁸

Lest it be construed that Kierkegaard here is only referring to Abraham, he adds,

⁶ Lowrie, 25.

⁷ Quoted by Walter Lowrie, trans., Fear and Trembling by Soren Kierkegaard. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1954), 12.

⁸ Quoted by Lowrie, trans., Fear and Trembling, 12.

"He who has explained this riddle has explained my life. Yet who was there among my contemporaries that understood me?"⁹

As Lowrie notes, Kierkegaard did not really wish this to be understood and exactly how breaking off the engagement might save Regina's God-relationship is not made clear.¹⁰

But it does seem clear that he continued to love Regina even after she married someone else.

The great love of his life was Regina Olsen (her name was really Regine, only S.K. called her Regina). Apparently S.K. loved her very deeply; certainly his Journals indicate that he did. They became engaged to be married, but S.K. broke the engagement. Regina wept bitterly, said that she would surely die, and she and her father pleaded with S.K. to go on with the wedding. He remained firm in his refusal. A few years later, she married another man, but S.K. never married. The Journals show that he never forgot her, nor did he cease to love her.

Disputes as to the extent and exact nature of the influences of Kierkegaard's father and broken engagement on his future writing will undoubtedly continue. For the purposes of this work it is sufficient to say that from the time he broke off with Regina until his death, Kierkegaard wrote more than 20 books, a prodigious accomplishment in a mere 14 years.

⁹ Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, trans. Walter Lowrie, (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1954), 12.

¹⁰ It may be that Soren believed his father's "unpardonable sin" had so tainted the Kierkegaard family that Regina must not marry into it. This however is little more than conjecture since Kierkegaard never explicitly gives the reason for breaking the engagement.

¹¹ Duncan, 22-23.

Many of Kierkegaard's works dealt directly or indirectly with the subject of faith. He first explores the subject (largely tangentially) in Either/Or.¹² Kierkegaard then devotes an entire book to the subject, when he has his pseudonym, Johannes de Silentio, ponder Abraham, the "knight of faith" in Fear and Trembling. He returns to the subject of faith in several sections of both Philosophical Fragments and its sequel, Concluding Unscientific Postscript.

In this work, no attempt will be made to sort the significance of the various pseudonyms employed by Kierkegaard.¹³ Although it will be argued that Kierkegaard himself did express a particular understanding of faith across several of his works, whether this was his own view of faith is not a decisive element in the overall argument of the present work. The understanding of faith Kierkegaard presents in these volumes is being offered as a distinctive type or pole of faith, which can illumine current discussions and practices within contemporary American evangelicalism. While this writer takes the view that Kierkegaard sincerely held the view of faith reflected in these works, this point will not be argued in this venue.

The purpose of elucidating particular salient aspects of the view of faith Kierkegaard presents will be accomplished in this chapter

¹² Soren Kierkegaard, Either/Or, trans. David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson, revised by Howard A. Johnson (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1959).

¹³ For an excellent treatment of this complex subject, see Mark C. Taylor, Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship: A Study of Time and the Self (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1975).

primarily through an investigation of three of Kierkegaard's works: Fear and Trembling, Philosophical Fragments and Concluding Unscientific Postscript. These books have been chosen as they are the most often quoted in discussions of Kierkegaard's view of faith.¹⁴ What will be shown is that although Kierkegaard employs some diversity of terminology between the three works, there are several themes which emerge common to all three.¹⁵ Quotations and citations have been chosen to clarify selected aspects of the view of faith Kierkegaard presents which have points of correlation with current evangelical writers and which contribute to the understanding of faith as trust to be proposed as a contribution of the present work.

Kierkegaard's View of Faith

Faith in Fear and Trembling

Early in Fear and Trembling, Kierkegaard introduces a theme which is woven through each of the three works. In a chapter called, "A Panegyric upon Abraham," Kierkegaard praises him as one who "left one thing behind, took one thing with him: He left his earthly understanding behind and took faith with him--otherwise he would not

¹⁴ This can be seen in the secondary sources cited later in this chapter. For an example of one who does not see these three works as central to Kierkegaard's understanding of faith, see Alastair McKinnon, "Kierkegaard's Accounts of Faith: Their Relative Centrality," Studia Theologica 46 (1992): 147-159.

¹⁵ No attempt is being made in the present work to exhaustively chronicle and interpret every reference Kierkegaard makes to the subject of faith in these three works. Such an endeavor would require several chapters if not several books.

have wandered forth but would have thought this unreasonable."¹⁶ This theme of faith being contrary to, or beyond, reason is developed somewhat in Fear and Trembling. Kierkegaard, through his pseudonym, Johannes de Silentio, stands in awe of Abraham who "believed the preposterous."¹⁷ The example of Abraham's faith presents Silentio with an "enormous paradox."¹⁸ Faith cannot be gained by rational means because the Christian must put faith in an object which is absurd. Speaking through the persona of the not-yet-Christian Johannes De Silentio, Kierkegaard says "I am unable to make the movements of faith, I cannot shut my eyes and plunge confidently into the absurd, for me that is an impossibility."¹⁹

Silentio sees Abraham's faith in sacrificing Isaac as believing in a God who was absurd and beyond all human reason.

He believed by virtue of the absurd; for there could be no question of human calculation, and it was indeed the absurd that God who required it of him should the next instant recall the requirement.²⁰

In the same context, Silentio reinforces the contrast between human reason (reckoning) and Abraham's faith. "He believed by virtue of the absurd; for all human reckoning had long since ceased to function."²¹

¹⁶ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 31

¹⁷ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 35.

¹⁸ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 44.

¹⁹ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 44.

²⁰ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 46.

²¹ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 47.

Silentio clarifies that the absurd is not merely unusual or unanticipated, aspects with which human understanding could reasonably deal.

The absurd is not one of the factors which can be discriminated within the proper compass of the understanding: it is not identical with the improbable, the unexpected, the unforeseen.²²

The knight of faith (such as Abraham) recognizes the impossibility and grasps the absurd by faith.

This is quite as clear to the knight of faith, so the only thing that can save him is the absurd, and this he grasps by faith. So he recognizes the impossibility, and that very instant he believes the absurd²³

So Kierkegaard, through Silentio, is delimiting boundaries for the functioning of human reason or understanding. True faith, such as that exercised by the knight of faith Abraham, can only function once the realm of reason has been left behind. This idea is amplified when it is contrasted with the religious movement of "resignation."

For the act of resignation faith is not required, for what I gain by resignation is my eternal consciousness, and this is a purely philosophical movement which I dare say I am able to make if it is required, and which I can train myself to make, for whenever any finiteness would get the mastery over me, I starve myself until I can make the movement, for my eternal consciousness is my love to God, and for me this is higher than everything. For the act of resignation faith is not required, but it is needed when it is that case of acquiring the very least thing more than my eternal consciousness, for this is the paradoxical.²⁴

²² Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 57.

²³ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 58.

²⁴ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 59.

Kierkegaard calls resignation “a purely philosophical movement” which a human can make through her own efforts, though strenuous, without any exercise of faith.²⁵ But to go beyond human resignation does require faith because the knight of faith must believe that which is paradoxical. To do this requires a humble and paradoxical courage. “But a paradoxical and humble courage is required to grasp the whole of the temporal by virtue of the absurd, and this is the courage of faith.”²⁶

So the first theme noted in Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling is the relation between faith and reason, namely that the domain of true faith is beyond reason. Faith is a courageous and paradoxical belief in that which is impossible, absurd. It will be seen that Kierkegaard develops this theme further in Philosophical Fragments and Concluding Unscientific Postscript.

A second theme which emerges from Fear and Trembling is that Christian faith entails passionate commitment. In a lengthy passage where Kierkegaard is trying to describe the movement of faith, he proposes the analogy of a young man who falls in love with a princess.²⁷ Despite the advice that some more common woman would be

²⁵ It is not within the scope or central purpose of this present work to develop Kierkegaard's concept of “resignation” but in this same context Kierkegaard does give a brief definition when he states that “in resignation I make renunciation of everything” Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 59.

²⁶ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 59.

²⁷ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 52.

as good a match, the man commits himself irrevocably to the love of the princess, although from any reasonable point of view the match is an impossibility.²⁸ In a footnote at the end of this analogy, Kierkegaard asserts that this movement (or irrevocable commitment) is one of passion not rational reflection.

To this end passion is necessary. Every movement of infinity comes about by passion, and no reflection can bring a movement about. This is the continual leap in existence which explains the movement²⁹

Kierkegaard concludes that "what our age lacks, however, is not reflection but passion."³⁰ Then in moving from the analogy of the young man to the knight of faith, Kierkegaard asserts that the latter must be able to concentrate everything into one passionate wish. "The knight will have power to concentrate the whole content of life and the whole significance of reality in one single wish." The one who lacks this focus will never be able to make the movement of passionate faith.³¹

Kierkegaard stresses that there can be no whole-hearted passion without a recognition of the impossibility of the belief. Anyone who aspires to faith but fails to recognize the role of impossibility in passion is deceived.

²⁸ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 53

²⁹ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 53.

³⁰ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 53.

³¹ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 53.

If without recognizing the impossibility with all the passion of his soul and with all his heart, he should wish to imagine that he has faith, he deceives himself, and his testimony has no bearing.³²

Echoing his earlier assertion that the movement of resignation can be made on a purely human basis, but faith is paradoxical, Kierkegaard now contrasts a tragic hero (who can be understood and counseled by many) and faith which no one can understand because it is a miraculous passion.

A man can become a tragic hero by his own powers--but not a knight of faith. When a man enters upon the way, in a certain sense the hard way of the tragic hero, many will be able to give him counsel, to him who follows the narrow way of faith no one can give counsel, him no one can understand. Faith is a miracle, and yet no man is excluded from it; for that in which all human life is unified is passion, and faith is a passion.³³

So for Kierkegaard, faith is a passion and it is also a miracle.

In the closing paragraphs of Fear and Trembling, Kierkegaard twice reiterates that faith is a passion, the highest of all human passions.

But the highest passion in a man is faith, and here no generation begins at any other point than did the preceding generation, every generation begins all over again³⁴

Faith is the highest passion in a man. There are perhaps many in every generation who do not even reach it, but no one gets further.³⁵

³² Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 77.

³³ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 77.

³⁴ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 130.

³⁵ Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 131.

Not only is faith the highest human passion, it cannot be inherited or passed on; each person finds passion as an individual.

In Fear and Trembling, there are two interwoven conceptions of faith important to the present work. The first is that faith is beyond reason or a-rational; it is a courageous and paradoxical belief in that which is impossible or absurd. The second understanding of faith is that it is a passionate commitment which recognizes impossibility and is not based on reflection. Note that in both Kierkegaard's discussion of the a-rationality of faith and its dimension of passionate commitment, the themes of impossibility and the uselessness of rational reflection recur.

Faith in Philosophical Fragments

In Philosophical Fragments, as in Fear and Trembling, there are two aspects of Kierkegaard's understanding of faith which are important in relation to modern evangelicalism. One of them (the relation between faith and reason) bears many similarities to statements found in Fear and Trembling. The other (the condition of faith) is elaborated for the first time in Philosophical Fragments.

In exploring the a-rational or supra-rational aspect of faith, Kierkegaard argues that faith cannot be the basis for believing that God exists nor can it aid one in coming into a relationship with God. Kierkegaard argues that reason is not useful for either proving nor for disproving the existence of God. "For if God does not exist it would of course be impossible to prove it; and if he does exist it would be folly

to attempt it."³⁶ This will always be true since a proof for the existence of anything presupposes the existence of that in question. "Thus I always reason from existence, not toward existence, whether I move in the sphere of palpable sensible fact or in the realm of thought."³⁷ Neither can I deduce God's existence from His works since the "works" (nature, the events of history) are not self interpreting.

From what works then do I propose to derive the proof? From the works as apprehended through an ideal interpretation, i.e., such as they do not immediately reveal themselves.³⁸

It is also pointless to try to prove the existence of God (or the God-Man) by means of probability. If we try to prove an intrinsically improbable idea (such as "God became Man"), by means of probability we become involved in an inherently contradictory (and "stupid") project.

The idea . . . of attaching a demonstration of probability to the improbable (to prove--that it is probable? but in that case the concept is altered; to prove that it is improbable? but in that case it is a contradiction to use probability for the purpose) is so stupid when seriously conceived,³⁹ that it would seem impossible for it to be entertained.

³⁶ Kierkegaard [Johannes Climacus], Philosophical Fragments or A Fragment of Philosophy, trans. David F. Swenson; rev. trans by Howard V. Hong (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962), 49.

³⁷ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 50.

³⁸ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 52.

³⁹ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 118.

In Kierkegaard's view, it is not appropriate to use the word faith to describe something one knows to be true by means of rational argument or deduction. Thus Socrates cannot be said to have faith in God's existence, rather he knew of God's existence.

From the eternal point of view, one does not have Faith that the God exists [eternally is], even if one assumes that he does exist. The use of the word Faith in this connection enshrines a misunderstanding. Socrates did not have faith that the God existed. What he knew about the God he arrived at by way of Recollection.⁴⁰

In short, faith is not a form of rational knowledge. "It is easy to see, though it scarcely needs to be pointed out, since it is involved in the fact that the Reason is set aside, that Faith is not a form of Knowledge" ⁴¹

In similar fashion, Kierkegaard argues at length that reason can never be the basis on which faith comes to know its object, the Unknown (God).

Reason thus comes repeatedly into collision with this Unknown, which does indeed exist, but is unknown, and in so far does not exist. The Reason cannot advance beyond this point, and yet it cannot refrain in its paradoxicalness from arriving at this limit and occupying itself therewith.⁴²

Reason can come as far as to realize there is something beyond it, but Reason cannot understand this Unknown. A human cannot even understand God through reason because God "is absolutely unlike

⁴⁰ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 108.

⁴¹ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 76.

⁴² Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 55.

man" and "man is absolutely unlike God."⁴³ The dissimilarity does not derive from the way God made humanity but rather from what humanity has added. "This unlikeness must therefore be explained by what man derives from himself, or by what he has brought upon his own head."⁴⁴ Kierkegaard then names the unlikeness as "sin."⁴⁵

In discussing the unlikeness between God and humanity, Kierkegaard returns to the theme of paradox which was dealt with briefly in the examination of Fear and Trembling. There Kierkegaard was speaking of the paradox of Abraham's life (and likely, his sacrifice of Isaac). However in Philosophical Fragments his interest is in the paradox of the gulf between God and us. Kierkegaard identifies two aspects of the paradoxical gap between humans and God: we are absolutely unlike God due to sin and this unlikeness can only be done away by one who is both God and Man.

Thus our paradox . . . has the double aspect which proclaims it as the Absolute Paradox; negatively by revealing the absolute unlikeness of sin, positively by proposing to do away with the absolute unlikeness in absolute likeness.⁴⁶

And God's means of doing away with sin, which is the incarnation, is a paradox which human reason can neither discover, understand, nor conceive.

⁴³ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 58.

⁴⁴ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 58.

⁴⁵ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 58.

⁴⁶ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 59.

The Reason will doubtless find it impossible to conceive it, could not of itself have discovered it, and when it hears it announced will not be able to understand it⁴⁷

In discussing the relation between reason and the paradox of sin and incarnation, Kierkegaard has touched on the second of the themes of Philosophical Fragments with which we must be concerned. This second theme, one which was not developed in Fear and Trembling, is Kierkegaard's understanding of the condition of faith. However in discussing the condition of faith, Kierkegaard frequently invokes the now familiar concept of paradox. Kierkegaard introduces the notion of the condition of faith by posing the problem that comes when we consider the situation of a learner acquiring Truth.

Now if the learner is to acquire the Truth, the Teacher must bring it to him; and not only so, but he must also give him the condition necessary for understanding it.⁴⁸

So, Kierkegaard reasons, the teacher must provide the necessary condition for us as humans to learn the Truth. Someone who can provide the condition is no ordinary teacher but would have to be God.

But one who gives the learner not only the Truth, but also the condition for understanding it, is more than a teacher. All instruction depends upon the presence, in the last analysis, of the requisite condition; if this is lacking, no teacher can do anything. For otherwise he would find it necessary not only to transform the learner, but to recreate him before beginning to teach him. But this is something that no human being can do; if it is to be done, it must be done by the God himself.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 59.

⁴⁸ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 17.

⁴⁹ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 18.

God is the only Teacher who can teach us (cause us to recall) that we have lost the condition of learning the truth through sin.

The Teacher is then the God himself, who in acting as an occasion prompts the learner to recall that he is in Error, and that by reason of his own guilt. But this state, the being in Error by reason of one's own guilt, what shall we call it? Let us call it Sin.

The Teacher, then, is the God, and he gives the learner the requisite condition and the Truth.⁵⁰

The divine Teacher can both cause the learner to understand that she is in Error (sin) and give the occasion for her to learn the Truth.

This Teacher must not only be God, but paradoxically he must also be Man. He must be God to give the condition (remind us of our sin) but he also must be Man to be able to truly bring the learner into possession of the Truth.

But Faith must steadily hold fast to the Teacher. In order that he may have the power to give the condition the Teacher must be the God; in order that he may be able to put the learner in possession of it he must be Man. This contradiction is again the object of Faith, and is the Paradox, the Moment.⁵¹

Through the paradox of the incarnation, the God-Man can make it possible for us to see and know God through faith.

The God gave to the disciple the condition that enables him to see him, opening for him the eyes of Faith.⁵²

Kierkegaard amplifies the relation between the condition of faith, the incarnation, and paradox by introducing the notion that to believe

⁵⁰ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 19.

⁵¹ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 77.

⁵² Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 80.

the incarnation requires a miracle because the incarnation is intrinsically paradoxical. Faith is paradoxical because it has "the Paradox for its object."⁵³ Just as it is a miracle for God to also be Man, so to believe this is also a miracle. "Faith is itself a miracle, and all that holds true of the Paradox also holds true of Faith."⁵⁴ The incarnation is the "Absolute Paradox"⁵⁵ and nothing anyone has done or will do after that event can retroactively transform it to make it less paradoxical. "It is and remains the Paradox, and cannot be assimilated by any speculation."⁵⁶

Kierkegaard sums up his teaching about faith and the condition in the closing paragraph (the "Moral") of Philosophical Fragments. He considers his volume to be a contribution, "since we have here assumed a new organ: Faith; a new presupposition: the consciousness of Sin; a new decision: Moment; and a new Teacher: the God in Time."⁵⁷

As in Fear and Trembling, in the Philosophical Fragments Kierkegaard weaves together two aspects of faith which are important to the discussion of current evangelicalism. Where in the former work the two ideas were that faith is a-rational and that faith is a passionate

⁵³ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 81.

⁵⁴ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 81.

⁵⁵ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 118-19.

⁵⁶ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 120.

⁵⁷ Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 139.

commitment, in the Fragments Kierkegaard explores the a-rationality of faith in conjunction with God providing the condition or occasion of faith.

In the Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Kierkegaard returns to an examination of the two themes which were highlighted in Fear and Trembling, the a-rationality of faith and faith as passionate commitment. The particular aspect of the disjunction between faith and reason which Kierkegaard emphasizes in the Postscript is the antipathy of faith for objective evidence.

Kierkegaard begins by asserting that any attempt to turn to historical evidence for Christianity as an aid to faith is futile because the most that historical inquiry can ever yield is an approximation.

When Christianity is viewed from the standpoint of its historical documentation, it becomes necessary to secure an entirely trustworthy account of what the Christian doctrine really is. If the inquirer were infinitely interested in behalf of his relationship to the doctrine he would at once despair; for nothing is more readily evident than that the greatest attainable certainty with respect to anything historical is merely an approximation.⁵⁸

But an approximation is useless when one's eternal happiness is at stake; nothing short of absolute certainty will do. "And an approximation, when viewed as a basis for an eternal happiness, is wholly inadequate since the incommensurability makes a result impossible."⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Kierkegaard, Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), 25

⁵⁹ Kierkegaard, Postscript, 25.

Kierkegaard goes further and asserts that the attempts of apologetic theologians is worse than futile since proof is the enemy of faith.

Here is the crux of the matter, and I come back to the case of the learned theology. For whose sake is it that the proof is sought? Faith does not need it; aye, it must even regard the proof as its enemy.⁶⁰

Proof is the enemy of faith because proof focuses the attention of the individual on objectivity. But the truth of Christianity exists only in personal subjective experience.

Christianity protests every form of objectivity; it desires that the subject should be infinitely concerned about himself. It is subjectivity that Christianity is concerned with, and it is only in subjectivity that its truth exists.⁶¹

For the believer, God is a subject who "exists only for subjectivity in inwardness."⁶² Therefore any attempt to come to God in faith must eschew any form of rationality (such as historical evidence) which would distract the individual toward an objective focus. So for Kierkegaard, objectivity and a focus on rational proofs for Christianity is the enemy of faith.

Postscript also includes a further elaboration of the role of passionate commitment in faith. Kierkegaard begins by defining Christianity as "essentially passion."

Christianity is spirit, spirit is inwardness, inwardness is subjectivity, subjectivity is essentially passion, and in its

⁶⁰ Kierkegaard, Postscript, 31.

⁶¹ Kierkegaard, Postscript, 116.

⁶² Kierkegaard, Postscript, 178.

maximum an infinite, personal, passionate interest in one's eternal happiness.⁶³

If passionate interest is lost, no commitment or movement of faith is possible for "decisiveness inheres in subjectivity alone, essentially in its passion, and maximally in the personal passion which is infinitely interested in an eternal happiness."⁶⁴ Personal passionate interest in the eternal is the pinnacle of Christian faith.

Passionate faith should be a daily, continual exercise of the will. Kierkegaard says that a believer can be assured of eternal happiness but only through a daily exercise of faith.

It should be noted that this assurance is the sort of assurance that can be had in faith, i.e. not an assurance once for all, but a daily acquisition of the sure spirit of faith through the infinite personal passionate interest.⁶⁵

This daily acquisition is clarified to be holding fast that which is objectively uncertain with a passionate commitment.

An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth⁶⁶

Kierkegaard adds that "the above definition of truth is an equivalent expression for faith. Without risk there is no faith."⁶⁷ For Kierkegaard faith entails risk because it passionately holds fast an objective uncertainty.

⁶³ Kierkegaard, Postscript, 33.

⁶⁴ Kierkegaard, Postscript, 35.

⁶⁵ Kierkegaard, Postscript, 53.

⁶⁶ Kierkegaard, Postscript, 182.

⁶⁷ Kierkegaard, Postscript, 182.

Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this I must believe. If I wish to preserve myself in faith I must constantly be intent upon holding fast the objective uncertainty, so as to remain out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, still preserving my faith.⁶⁸

This is the picture of Kierkegaard's passionate faith, an individual at risk over seventy fathoms with no visible means of support.

In Postscript, more completely than in Fear and Trembling, Kierkegaard explores the relationship between the a-rational and passionate aspects of faith. Kierkegaard notes a number of manifestations of rationality. These rationalistic hindrances to passionate faith include: the scientific method which can "cheat men out of the simple profound and passionate wonder";⁶⁹ a scholar's interest in Christianity which yields no more than "the comic thoughtlessness of his parrot-like echo";⁷⁰ and certainty about the truth of Christianity or the reliability of the Bible, "for if passion is eliminated, faith no longer exists, and certainty and passion do not go together."⁷¹ Kierkegaard charges that those who are concerned about proof are like a young woman who "secretly feels ashamed of her lover and must therefore have it established that there is something remarkable about him."⁷²

⁶⁸ Kierkegaard, Postscript, 182.

⁶⁹ Kierkegaard, Postscript, xv.

⁷⁰ Kierkegaard, Postscript, 24.

⁷¹ Kierkegaard, Postscript, 30.

⁷² Kierkegaard, Postscript, 31.

Likewise, only when faith ceases to be true passionate faith "then a proof becomes necessary so as to command respect from the side of unbelief."⁷³

Kierkegaard argues that decision or commitment must have the linked components of subjectivity, passion, and infinite interest. The objective, contemplative person can never reach the passionate commitment of faith.

As soon as subjectivity is eliminated, and passion eliminated from subjectivity, and the infinite interest eliminated from passion, there is in general no decision at all, either in this problem or in any other. All decisiveness, all essential decisiveness, is rooted in subjectivity. A contemplative spirit, and this is what the objective subject is, feels nowhere any infinite need of a decision, and sees no decision anywhere.⁷⁴

In the conclusion to Concluding Unscientific Postscript

Kierkegaard summarizes the main themes of the work.

SUBJECTIVELY, WHAT IT IS TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN IS DEFINED THUS: The decision lies with the subject. The appropriation is the paradoxical inwardness which is specifically different from all other inwardness. The thing of being a Christian is not determined by the what of Christianity but by the how of the Christian.⁷⁵

The "what" of Christianity would be the rational, objective focus which Kierkegaard has declared the enemy of faith. The "how" of Christianity is the subjective passionate commitment, the risk of faith.

⁷³ Kierkegaard, Postscript, 31.

⁷⁴ Kierkegaard, Postscript, 33.

⁷⁵ Kierkegaard, Postscript, 540.

In these three works, Kierkegaard has dealt with three aspects of faith which will be important to an understanding of faith as trust as a basis for a theory of evangelical Christian education. The first aspect of faith is treated in all three works. In each of the three books Kierkegaard concludes that true faith is a-rational or goes beyond reason. In Postscript he even asserts that rational proof is the enemy of faith. The second aspect of faith is passionate commitment which Kierkegaard treats in Fear and Trembling and Postscript. The third aspect of faith important to contemporary evangelicalism is Kierkegaard's notion of the condition of faith which he deals with in detail only in Philosophical Fragments.

Taking the three works together, Kierkegaard views faith as an a-rational passionate commitment the condition of which is miraculously given by God. Each of these elements will be considered in Chapter 5 when a reconstructed view of faith as trust will be proposed.

Affirmations of Viewing Kierkegaard's Faith as Irrational Commitment

Other readers of Kierkegaard have observed his emphasis that faith cannot be based on rational arguments and therefore must involve a radical, passionate commitment. Robert Merrihew Adams notes that Concluding Unscientific Postscript is "probably the most commonly cited" representative of the view that "there is something in the nature of religious faith itself that renders it useless or undesirable

to reason objectively in support of such faith."⁷⁶ He understands Kierkegaard as saying that "faith must be decisive; in fact it seems to consist in a sort of decision-making." He reads Kierkegaard as believing that "faith requires a 'leap' beyond the evidence, a leap that cannot be justified by objective reasoning."⁷⁷ Louis Pojman concurs that Kierkegaard's faith involves a decision. In speaking of the "Christian religious stage" (religiousness B) of faith Pojman understands Kierkegaard to hold that "grace is need [sic] to enable the individual to believe what is otherwise preposterous, but once grace is given, one is free to reject or accept the proposition."⁷⁸ Pojman sees Kierkegaard as a radical volitionalist who deems "every belief acquisition as a resolution of the will."⁷⁹ He identifies Kierkegaard's view as "volitionalism,"⁸⁰ which Pojman defines as "the thesis that we can attain beliefs by willing to have them, and that we ought to attain some beliefs in this manner."⁸¹ In commenting on Fear and Trembling, Virginia Stem Owens summarizes this view of the sharp cleavage between faith and reason.

⁷⁶ Robert Merrihew Adams, "Kierkegaard's Arguments Against Objective Reasoning in Religion," in Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology, ed. Louis Pojman (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing, 1987), 408

⁷⁷ Adams, 410.

⁷⁸ Louis P. Pojman, Religious Belief and the Will (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), 73.

⁷⁹ Pojman, Religious Belief, 146.

⁸⁰ Pojman, Religious Belief, 105.

⁸¹ Pojman, Religious Belief, 103.

Herein lies the difference, Kierkegaard points out, between resignation and faith, between the tragic hero and Abraham. "Faith begins," he says, "precisely where thinking leaves off."⁸²

Objections to Viewing Kierkegaard's Faith

as Irrational Commitment

Not all accept that Kierkegaard sees faith as a-rational and primarily volitional in character. David Wisdo reads Kierkegaard as drawing a sharp distinction between belief in historical events and the specifically religious Christian belief. When it comes to historical belief, we must exercise the will. "Because all such beliefs are uncertain and open to doubt, the only way to explain the acquisition of these beliefs is by an appeal to the will which, as Climacus says, negates doubt."⁸³ But Christian faith "cannot be reduced to a 'special case' of ordinary belief."⁸⁴ Rather, (as Wisdo interprets Kierkegaard) it is a miracle which no human can produce nor reject.

Faith can be reduced neither to a knowledge of eternal truth, nor to a belief in a historical truth. The point is that faith is a miracle which cannot be explained by speculative philosophy. Ultimately, no one can become a disciple unless he or she receives from God the Condition (Betingelsen), the gift of grace which transforms the individual into a new creature. Indeed, such a transformation cannot be explained by an appeal to the will for the simple reason that it is beyond human power.⁸⁵

⁸² Virginia Stem Owens, "A Faith that Trembles and Dances," Christianity Today, 14 July 1989, 22.

✓ ⁸³ David Wisdo, "Kierkegaard on Belief, Faith, and Explanation," International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 21 (1991): 101.

⁸⁴ Wisdo, 107.

⁸⁵ Wisdo, 109.

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If Wisdo is correct, then Kierkegaard thinks the activity of the will is inoperative at the moment of becoming a Christian. Becoming a Christian would not, then, be a decision or a commitment, but something that simply happens to some people and not to others. Wisdo appears to have created a dichotomy: either Christian belief is an act of the will on the part of the one who becomes a Christian or it is a miracle and the potential believer can, at the moment of salvation, do nothing. There is no good reason to believe that these two alternatives were seen as mutually exclusive by Kierkegaard. Rather, Kierkegaard seems to affirm both that faith is a gift and that we must exercise it passionately. As M. Jamie Ferreira comments,

Such a dichotomy is exhaustive only if a gift is seen as exclusive of human activity, or if the freedom of an act is seen as incompatible with its being a gift. Since the freedom of an act, in Climacus's view, is not incompatible with its being a gift, there is no a priori reason why he would reject the possibility of a description of an agent's free transition in which faith is (conditionally) brought about.⁸⁶

A more balanced reading of Kierkegaard would seem to be that, yes, a miraculous gift of grace is a necessary prerequisite to the move from religiousness A to B, but the individual is not merely a helpless or passive recipient. The gift of grace can still be rejected or received. C. Stephen Evans concludes that while faith cannot be "produced by an act of the will," the believer can will "to be open to God's gift of

⁸⁶ M. Jamie Ferreira, "Kierkegaardian Faith: 'The Condition' and the Response," International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 28 (Oct. 1990): 77.

faith."⁸⁷ So for Evans, Kierkegaard can be a volitionalist and also believe that true Christian faith comes only through God's grace. Contrary to Wisdo, Evans believes that Kierkegaard views true Christian faith as a kind of belief. "[Kierkegaard] sees faith as a special kind of belief. Faith is ordinary belief which is also faith or belief in the eminent sense."⁸⁸ Evans also argues that passions (including true Christian religious passion) are cultivated through acts of the will, although generally indirectly through choosing to behave as if we believed.

Acts of willing play a role in their cultivation, and Kierkegaard regards the higher ethical and religious passions as things we are responsible to achieve. However, by and large, passions are formed on a long-term basis, and they are not simply willed into existence, but formed indirectly through a process of willing to do other things.⁸⁹

Jacob Golomb also understands Kierkegaard to be saying that true Christian faith involves a radical commitment. One can choose "to become an authentic individual by committing the 'leap of enthusiasm,' the 'leap into the arms of God.'"⁹⁰ Golomb argues that we have a choice to receive or reject true faith.

Kierkegaard stresses that we "receive" or accept ourselves by becoming what we genuinely are, namely individuals prepared for the pathos of authentic faith. This is not

⁸⁷ C. Stephen Evans, "Does Kierkegaard Think Beliefs Can be Directly Willed?" International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 26 (1989): 182.

⁸⁸ Evans, "Does Kierkegaard?" 175.

⁸⁹ Evans, "Does Kierkegaard?" 179.

⁹⁰ Jacob Golomb, "Kierkegaard's Ironic Ladder to Authentic Faith" International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 32 (1992): 67.

pre-determined becoming (as in the biological model) but is achieved by free acts of will. Thus one may deny or repress one's inclination to transcendence and be alienated from one's genuine self.⁹¹

Golomb sees an even more active role for the will in acquiring passion than does Evans.

Authenticity consists in acts of willing passionately and sincerely to become an authentic individual. This becoming authentic can be mainly attained spontaneously by "the instant of choice."⁹²

While Evans and Golomb disagree on whether the will influences passion primarily over time or in a moment of choice, they both observe that Kierkegaard has a crucial role for the choices of the will on the part of the believer in achieving passionate faith.⁹³ It would seem contrary to Kierkegaard's avowal in Point of View that his whole work as an author was directed toward answering the question, "how can one become a Christian," if his final answer were to be, "you can do nothing to become a Christian; you must rather wait passively and hope God makes you one." Wisdo is right that Kierkegaard views the condition of faith as a miracle bestowed by God's grace. But his conclusion that this eliminates any role for human volition in the faith by which one becomes a Christian is unwarranted.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Golomb, 73-74.

⁹² Golomb, 74.

⁹³ Evans' view seems more consonant with Kierkegaard's comments about the "daily acquisition of the sure spirit of faith" previously quoted. See Kierkegaard, Postscript, 53.

⁹⁴ See also Pojman's own defense, "Kierkegaard on Faith and Freedom," International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 27 (1990): 41-61.

Just as not all agree on Kierkegaard's volitionalism, so some also question the idea that Kierkegaard's view of faith includes no constructive role for rationality. Is Kierkegaard an irrationalist or does reason play some role in his conception of authentic Christian faith?

C. S. Evans argues that Kierkegaard is not an irrationalist by invoking Alvin Plantinga's concept that faith in God can be considered "properly basic" and therefore may be rational even in the absence of evidence.⁹⁵

In a similar way Climacus argues that faith in the incarnation may be basic and not the result of historical evidence. Evidence is neither necessary nor sufficient to produce the transformation of the individual. It is the experience of meeting God which produces the passion of faith.⁹⁶

Evans sees Kierkegaard as saying that the believer first has an experience with God which then leads to a rational choice based on that new experience.

We can now see that the Kierkegaardian leap of faith is hardly a blind leap into the dark, as it is often portrayed. The believer both knows what he is leaping to, and why he is leaping. We can also respond now to the frequently-made charge that willing to believe is a kind of immoral manipulation of my belief structure. The person of faith is not someone who tries to make herself believe something she knows is not true, or something she has no reason to think is true. Rather, she is someone who now has good

⁹⁵ See Alvin Plantinga, "On Taking Belief in God as Basic," in Religious Experience and Religious Belief, eds. Joseph Runzo and Craig K. Ihara (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1986), 1-17. See also Plantinga, "Religious Belief without Evidence," in Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology, ed. Louis P. Pojman (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing, 1987), 454-68.

⁹⁶ C. S. Evans, "Is Kierkegaard an Irrationalist? Reason, Paradox, and Faith," Religious Studies 25 (1989): 358.

reason to mistrust her earlier ideas⁹⁷ about what is true, as a result of an encounter with reality.

Marilyn Gaye Piety argues similarly that we can choose between world views on subjective grounds and still have our choices be considered rational.⁹⁸

But if Evans and Piety are right, if Kierkegaard is simply saying that we must exchange one sort of evidence (external and objective for inward and subjective) then why does Kierkegaard lay such emphasis on the idea that faith involves risk? If reasonable (although subjective) evidence is presented to me in an encounter with God before I am asked to exercise faith then why is that so risky?⁹⁹ But even if the Evans-Piety interpretation of Kierkegaard is correct, he is still arguing that objective certainty is an impediment to faith.

Kierkegaardian Tendencies in Evangelical Views of Faith

As previously noted there are strong similarities to a Locke-like view of faith in cur. *Heading - Kierkegaardian Tendencies* such as Ryrie and F. *In contents this is 2nd level heading under Kierkegaard's view...* salvation view frequ *Here, this is a 1st level heading.*

⁹⁷ Evans, "Is Kierkegaardian Tendencies?"

⁹⁸ Marilyn Gaye Piety, "Faith and Rationality," Faith and Philosophy 10 (1993): 335-78.

⁹⁹ A second problem with what Evans and Piety are proposing is that religious experience is not self interpreting. How would I know that what I experienced was Christ, not Vishnu (or a demon posing as an angel of light, for that matter)? John Hick, who endorses what Richard Swinburne calls the "principle of credulity," concludes that we can provisionally accept religious experience as veridical but we cannot reliably derive propositional content (such as the belief that Jesus is the God-man) from such experience. See John Hick, An Interpretation of Religion (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1989), 214-29.

understanding of faith. John MacArthur asserts that doctrine or the degree to which one understands or gives assent to certain beliefs is not the primary factor in saving faith.¹⁰⁰ Rather a whole-hearted, radical commitment is the central issue in salvation. This commitment is a redirection or transformation of the will as the result of a spiritual crisis.

This then is the primary point of contact between Kierkegaard and the current advocates of lordship salvation: seeing passionate or radical commitment as a crucial aspect of faith. Both Kierkegaard and the lordship evangelicals see an emphasis on doctrine or intellectual persuasion as missing the true nature of faith.

It is in regard to the role of reason or doctrinal assent that Kierkegaard can most readily be seen as an extreme or pure pole of this understanding of faith. As seen earlier in this chapter Kierkegaard sees faith as essentially a-rational or supra-rational. MacArthur and other lordship advocates are not nearly as strong in linking passionate commitment to any essential paradox of the gospel. They are not trying to assert that there is something essentially irrational about believing Jesus is the God-man. Theirs is a weaker rejection of a rational approach to faith; reason is not the enemy of faith, it is simply misguided to understand faith as primarily rational assent.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ MacArthur, Gospel, 28.

¹⁰¹ Given the definition of evangelical in Chapter 1, if the lordship advocates viewed doctrinal belief as totally unimportant, one could question whether they should be regarded as evangelicals at all since holding to certain doctrines is a crucial element of what it is to be an evangelical.

Although neither Kierkegaard nor Locke have been cited in the current lordship salvation controversy, their extreme or pure pole understanding can shed light on current controversy and the inadequacy of either of the current evangelical views of faith to provide a balanced base for developing an evangelical theory of Christian education. Is a radical commitment with little or no regard for rational understanding and assent an adequate evangelical view of faith? Not if the definition of evangelical in the first chapter is accurate. If an individual is to become an evangelical Christian, she must not only have a radical commitment, but she must give mental assent to certain doctrinal beliefs as true. Likewise mere doctrinal assent is in itself inadequate to make one an evangelical Christian, faith must also involve personal commitment to Christ. The exact formulation of how these understandings can be combined into a unified view of faith will be explored in the Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 5 will also discuss how elements of both Locke's and Kierkegaard's concepts of faith can play a role in a reconstructed view of faith which may serve as a mediating alternative to the conceptions being widely debated in the evangelical Lordship salvation controversy.

Summary

In Fear and Trembling, Philosophical Fragments and Concluding Unscientific Postscript Soren Kierkegaard explores three aspects of faith important to an understanding of faith as trust as a basis for a theory of evangelical Christian education. In each work, Kierkegaard argues that true faith is a-rational or goes beyond reason. In two of

the books, Fear and Trembling and Concluding Unscientific Postscript, he develops the theme that faith is a passionate commitment. In Philosophical Fragments, Kierkegaard affirm that it is God who provides the miraculous condition of faith.

The central understanding that Kierkegaard views faith as irrational commitment is affirmed or denied by various current Kierkegaard scholars. It has been argued that those who deny this view of Kierkegaard are misunderstanding his own statements concerning faith.

Current evangelical lordship advocates hold a view of faith similar to, but less extreme, than the understanding of Kierkegaard. While MacArthur and other lordship advocates see faith as radical or passionate commitment, they do not see reason as the enemy of faith, rather their reaction is to seeing rational assent to propositions as the primary or sole component of faith.

Chapter 4

Faith as Trust in E. J. Carnell.

E. J. Carnell (1919-1967) was at one time considered a part of "the vanguard of a new and resurgent evangelical scholarship."¹ According to Ronald Nash he was "generally acknowledged to be one of conservative Christianity's brightest scholars."² Although he has been dead more than a quarter of a century, Carnell continues to exert an influence on the current generation of evangelical thinkers. Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest of Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary recently dedicated the final volume of their systematic theology "to Edward John Carnell a major contributor to the resurgence of evangelicalism in the last half of the twentieth century and to the method of research in this theology."³ As a member of the founding faculty and second President of Fuller Seminary, Carnell stands as one of the seminal evangelical thinkers of the second half of the twentieth century.⁴

¹ Kenneth C. Harper, "Edward John Carnell: An Evaluation of His Apologetics," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 20 (1977): 145.

² Ronald H. Nash, editor's preface to The Case for Biblical Christianity, by E. J. Carnell (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1969), 5.

³ Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, Integrative Theology, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 5.

⁴ Secondary and critical literature on Carnell is sparse. As Kern R. Trembath noted in 1988: "He is rarely even referred to in secondary literature. In addition to the 'restriction' caused by his early death, therefore, we are further hampered in the present task by a lack of critical attention from others." See Trembath, "Evangelical Subjectivism: Edward John Carnell and the Logic of God," Evangelical Quarterly 60 (1988): 318.

Background of E. J. Carnell

Carnell was born in Antigo, Wisconsin, the son of a fundamental Baptist pastor.⁵ Although Herbert Carnell was a member in good standing of the fundamentalist Northern Baptist Convention, he did not fit the stereotype of a typical fundamentalist. He wrote of a gathering of his own denomination's ministers:

The Convention was one of the most disappointing I had ever attended, for the modernists and the fundamentalists were at each others' throats all the time. Frankly, I was ashamed to think that Christians would treat one another in such a way--even though they did disagree in many details of theology and biblical exegesis.⁶

In his later years, the elder Carnell was tolerant of wine-drinking among Christians and was openly critical of the "hush-hush atmosphere" regarding sexual matters he had experienced as a student at Moody Bible Institute.⁷ Perhaps E. J. Carnell's later repudiation of fundamentalism was more an extension of the largely unrealized tendencies of his father than it was a rebellion against the atmosphere in his own childhood home.

There is evidence, however, that at the time of his death in 1967, Carnell was exerting considerable influence on the emerging generation of young evangelical thinkers. See Millard Erickson, The New Evangelical Theology (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1968), 43-4, 127-28, 214, 219. L. Joseph Rosas III calls Carnell "one of the preeminent evangelical leaders of his day." See "The Theology of Edward John Carnell," Criswell Theological Review 4 (1990): 351.

⁵ John A. Sims, Edward John Carnell: Defender of the Faith (Washington, D. C.: University Press of America, 1979), 3.

⁶ Herbert Carnell, memoir, quoted by Rudolph Nelson in The Making and Unmaking of an Evangelical Mind (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), 22.

⁷ Nelson, Making and Unmaking, 23.

Aside from his own father, there were two personalities who would exert a profound influence on the youthful Carnell: Gordon Clark and Soren Kierkegaard. The first Carnell met as a professor during his undergraduate years at Wheaton College, the second as the subject of his Ph.D. dissertation at Boston University.

These two influences could not have been more distinct. While Clark challenged Carnell's mind, Kierkegaard stimulated him in the direction of emotion and personal experience.

Carnell received his undergraduate training at Wheaton College where he was influenced by G. H. Clark, a rigorous Christian rationalist and professor of philosophy who influenced an entire generation of Wheaton students.⁸

Although Carnell had been a mediocre student in high school,⁹ he discovered his life calling at Wheaton, in no small part due to the influence of Clark.

It is no exaggeration to say that he found himself intellectual at college, discovering a love and capacity for learning that set the direction for the rest of his life

The faculty member most responsible for igniting Carnell's intellectual fires was the late Gordon Haddon Clark.¹⁰

But there is evidence that the influence Clark exerted was one dimensional, restricted solely to logic and the mind.

As an unabashed rationalist who pursued truth with the mind, he was deaf to other dimensions of the philosophical

⁸ L. Joseph Rosas, III "The Theology of Edward John Carnell," Criswell Theological Review 4 (1990): 354.

⁹ Nelson, "Fundamentalism at Harvard: The Case of Edward John Carnell," Quarterly Review 2 (Summer 1982) 85.

¹⁰ Nelson, Making and Unmaking, 36.

enterprise and totally incapable of dealing sympathetically with, for example, a theologian like Karl Barth. On one occasion, a student who had read just about everything by Barth that had been translated into English was goaded by other students into attending one of Clark's classes on Barth. He was appalled to realize that Clark's negative pontifications were based exclusively on a reading of only one of Barth's earliest works. When the student pointed out in class discussion that Barth, in a more recent book, had changed his mind on a certain issue, Clark was non-plused. That was simply not how one should operate in such matters. Having once made up his mind on an issue, after a full exercise of the intellect, he did not change it.¹¹

Ironically, Clark and Carnell would later see the breakdown of their friendship of many years as the fallout of an interaction between Carnell and this same theologian, Karl Barth.¹²

Since a good deal has been previously written in this work concerning Kierkegaard and more will be covered later in this chapter, it may suffice at this point to say that the very things Carnell could never find in the influence of Clark--passion, a respect for personal experience, an appreciation for the complexity and enigma of the human condition--all of these and more Carnell found in the dour Dane. As Carnell completed his doctoral studies (and simultaneously published his first book), he was set on a course, whether consciously at this point or not, of trying to reconcile, or barring that, find some middle ground between, rational dogmatic orthodoxy and passionate personal commitment.

¹¹ Nelson, Making and Unmaking, 37.

¹² George Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 194-95.

Carnell's death at age forty-eight,¹³ a mere eighteen years after completing his doctorate at Boston, truncated what some have seen as the exploration of a new direction in evangelical theology toward what biographer Nelson labeled, "the apologetics of the heart."¹⁴

In this work, Carnell's understanding of faith will serve as an integration point for the disparate insights of Locke and Kierkegaard and a foundation for a reconstructed view of faith which can serve as the basis of a constructive critique of evangelical Christian education.

Carnell's View of Faith

Carnell's most complete definition of faith is found in a chapter devoted entirely to the subject in The Case for Orthodox Theology. He begins simply by stating, "Faith is the capacity of belief or trust."¹⁵ Carnell amplifies this definition by differentiating general from vital faith and both distinguishing as well as showing the continuity between the two.

¹³ The coroner's report gave the cause of death on April 14, 1967 as barbiturate overdose and concluded, "I find death undetermined whether ACCIDENTAL or SUICIDAL." The most complete treatment of this question to date is given in Nelson. He tentatively concludes that the evidence "strongly suggests accidental death" (p. 215). George Marsden generally agrees with Nelson's assessment but asserts more conclusively that Carnell's death "was not premeditated. It had none of the Carnell organization. The overdose was 'moderate,' and the room showed signs that the seizure was unexpected." See Marsden, 258.

¹⁴ Nelson, Making and Unmaking, 151-178.

¹⁵ Carnell, Case for Orthodox, 23.

General Faith and Vital Faith

Carnell defines "general" faith as "a resting of the mind in the sufficiency of the evidences."¹⁶ For Carnell it is the sort of faith that accepts things as true because there are good reasons to accept them. He does not endorse a clear separation between faith and knowledge expressing "little patience with the cliché that religious people have faith while men of science and philosophy have knowledge."¹⁷ Since faith is based on evidence, just as is knowledge, both appeal to facts in the real world. "Faith may stress commitment whereas knowledge stresses apprehension, but both make an equal draft on facts 'out there.'"¹⁸ Carnell asserts that those propositions which are given assent as knowledge and those given assent by general faith are supported by evidences which are equally objective in character. "We deem the evidences to be no less objective in the one case than we do in the other."¹⁹

Whereas general faith involves believing a thing, vital faith means to trust a person.²⁰ Carnell feels this is a richer sort of faith because it requires greater commitment. Carnell offers at least two distinct

¹⁶ Carnell, Case for Orthodox, 28. Nearly the same definition was given more than a decade earlier by Carnell, "Generic faith: A resting of the heart in the sufficiency of the evidences." See An Introduction to Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1948), 365.

¹⁷ Carnell, Case for Orthodox, 28.

¹⁸ Carnell, Case for Orthodox, 29.

¹⁹ Carnell, Case for Orthodox, 29.

²⁰ Carnell, Case for Orthodox, 28.

reasons for believing that vital faith involves greater commitment. First, the 'evidence' for trusting a person is not solely intellectual in nature, thus introducing the need for another faculty in addition to the intellect, namely intuition.

The meaning of geometry can be understood by the intellect alone, but the meaning of a person remains veiled until the intellect is joined by the intuitions of the heart.²¹

The second reason vital faith requires greater commitment is that relationship involves a kind of surrender that is not necessary when one has faith in a thing.²²

Whenever genuine fellowship is enjoyed, the distinction between faith and knowledge disappears, for to know another person is to trust him. "Now Adam knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain." (Gen. 4:1) The marital due requires such a total act of personal surrender that it is equated with knowledge. Again, "I never knew you," says the Lord; "depart from me, you evildoers." (Matt. 7:23) While the Lord apprehends evildoers, he does not know them in the only way that counts, namely, fellowship.²³

Continuity between General and Saving Faith

In speaking of The Case for Orthodox Theology, Kenneth C. Harper asserts that "virtually every element in Carnell's book can be traced to his earlier writings."²⁴ However, there is at least one subtle but important change in Carnell's organization and wording of the definition of faith which occurs between An Introduction to Christian

²¹ Carnell, Case for Orthodox, 29

²² Carnell, Case for Orthodox, 29

²³ Carnell, Case for Orthodox, 29

²⁴ Harper, 142.

Apologetics and Case for Orthodox published eleven years later. In Introduction, Carnell distinguishes between generic faith and saving faith which he defines as "a whole-person trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ." He amplifies that "saving faith is formed of three parts--knowledge (notitia), assent (assensus), and cordial trust (fiducia)."²⁵ But in Case for Orthodox, the cleft is between generic and vital faith. The definitions of generic and general are so nearly identical as to be considered, for the purposes of this analysis, wholly congruent. But there are two crucial aspects of the shift from "saving" to "vital" which deserve careful scrutiny.

First, in the prior understanding of faith, the prime division was between believer and non-believer. The non-Christian exercises only generic faith while the Christian employs both generic and saving. But in Carnell's revised definition, the believer and the non-believer both utilize general and vital faith. Carnell makes this greater continuity explicit in Case for Orthodox.

Vital faith is not unique to the religious life, let alone to Christianity. Like general faith, it belongs to the order of man as man. When a little boy sees his friend with a sack of candy he says, "You know me!" And he certainly does not mean that his friend can give an intellectual account of his person. He means, "We are on speaking terms; we like each other; so share your jelly beans!" He appeals to the moral obligation in fellowship--the obligation to surrender benefits as well as the self.²⁶

²⁵ Carnell, Introduction, 365.

²⁶ Carnell, Case for Orthodox, 29.

So vital faith is exercised whenever human beings (including children) are in relationship with one another.

The second important aspect of Carnell's shift from "saving" to "vital" faith is that Carnell now clarifies the way in which general faith is a part of vital faith. This dependence of the higher on the lower was implied in the earlier definition when Carnell included "knowledge" and "assent" as parts of saving faith. (Presumably knowledge and assent would also be parts of generic faith.) But in Case for Orthodox Carnell explains more fully:

General faith is the foundation of vital faith. This is true on every level of life. Before a husband can embrace his wife, he must be convinced that it is his wife, and not a stranger, before him.²⁷

So Carnell now sees every act of vital faith as also entailing one or more acts of general faith. And he does not limit this to earthly human relations. "The same is true in our approach to God. We must be convinced that we are confronting God, not a counterfeit."²⁸ So the vital faith that leads to a relationship with God also involves an exercise of general faith.

There is a third aspect of the difference between general and vital faith which deserves mention, although it is not a clear change from Introduction. Carnell views the degree of commitment as a crucial distinction between general and vital faith.

²⁷ Carnell, Case for Orthodox, 29-30.

²⁸ Carnell, Case for Orthodox, 30.

When a person assents to truth, or when he believes in an object, he commits part of himself. This is general faith. But when he trusts another person, he commits the whole of himself. This is vital faith. Fellowship is a union of life with life.²⁹ The essence of one person passes into that of another.

This understanding of vital faith involving a commitment of the whole person is congruent with Carnell's previous definition of saving faith ("a whole-person trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ"³⁰) with the distinction that the commitment of whole-person trust is now broadened to include non-Christians and to include relations with all persons (not just Christ).

Carnell develops the theme of the connection between our human relationships and our relationship with God more fully in Christian Commitment: An Apologetic, published just two years prior to The Case for Orthodox Theology.³¹ As Kern Trembath has noted, the emphasis of Carnell's earlier work, Introduction, is on the "systematic consistency" of evangelical theology.³² There he spends nearly one hundred pages arguing that "the Christian hypothesis" is logically coherent.³³

The mood and focus of Christian Commitment is radically different than that of Introduction. The mood is more irenic,

²⁹ Carnell, Case for Orthodox, 30.

³⁰ Carnell, Introduction, 30.

³¹ Edward John Carnell, Christian Commitment (New York: Macmillan, 1957).

³² Trembath, 317.

³³ Carnell, Introduction, 89-187.

autobiographical and reflective than his previous apologetic works and the focus is not on rational or systematic consistency but on what Carnell calls the "third method of knowing." Carnell names this third way of knowing, "knowledge by moral self-acceptance" and contrasts it with the first two ways of knowing, "knowledge by acquaintance" and "knowledge by inference."³⁴

Knowledge by acquaintance is that knowledge we acquire by direct experience. Our own feelings, the beauty of a sunset, these are examples of what Carnell calls knowledge by acquaintance. Only this sort of knowledge can apprehend ontological truth.

Since whatever is, is true, and since experience is our only way of apprehending the wholeness of what is, it follows that only knowledge by acquaintance can directly apprehend ontological truth. A child defines a cat by pointing at it. Since he experiences the cat, he know the cat.³⁵

Knowledge by inference is that which the mind acquires by logical, syllogistic reasoning. This is the sort of knowledge by which we become acquainted with propositional truth.³⁶ Carnell believes that philosophers generally have confined themselves to exploring ontological and propositional truth. He asserts that nearly all thinkers "have rather consistently confined themselves to a defense of these two

³⁴ Carnell, Christian Commitment, 17-23.

³⁵ Carnell, Christian Commitment, 18.

³⁶ Carnell, Christian Commitment, 18.

kinds of truth" and thereby ignored the moral and spiritual realities of human life.³⁷

Again, Carnell stresses that the third way of knowing is dependent on the prior two. Knowledge by moral self-acceptance must involve the other two forms of knowledge.

Suppose an archaeologist seeks permission to excavate a distant mound. Since the foreign government controls the site, while the archaeologist controls the techniques, only by friendly cooperation will either the government or the scientist know the meaning of the mound. The government has no direct access to knowledge; but without its authorization the archaeologist cannot begin to dig. So with moral self-acceptance: although knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by inference are the only ways in which the content of the imperative essence can be brought before the mind, only moral self-acceptance can release the data which make up this essence.³⁸

So it is through the mediation of direct experience and propositional understanding that we acquire knowledge by moral self-acceptance.

Although the subtitle of this volume calls it "an apologetic," Carnell insists that this is not simply a version of the moral argument for the existence of God.

The third method of knowing is a method, not a proof. It is merely a procedure by which one acquaints himself with the realities that already hold him. And the fact that man lives and moves and is in God is one of these realities. Man is held in the person of God from the first moment of moral self-consciousness--though he will never meet God until he is spiritually transformed by this relation.³⁹

³⁷ Carnell, Christian Commitment, 15. He lists as exceptions Socrates, Pascal, and Kierkegaard.

³⁸ Carnell, Christian Commitment, 23.

³⁹ Carnell, Christian Commitment, 109.

Without elaborating Carnell's third way of knowing in further detail, two observations pertinent to this discussion can now be made. First, in Christian Commitment, Carnell proposes a subjective way of knowing as central to a relationship with God. Second, he explicates the interrelationship of objective and subjective knowledge in coming to know God.

Saving faith is built on the foundation of generic faith, for we could never yield ourselves in cordial trust unless the whole man rested in the sufficiency of the evidences. We must distinguish our friend from a tree; and not only from a tree, but from other people milling about him.⁴⁰

Generic faith (resting in evidences) is a necessary prerequisite to vital saving faith (placing whole-person cordial trust in Christ). Since God is a person, we cannot come into relationship with God without vital faith.

For Carnell, saving faith includes both general (or generic) and vital faith. It is near the end of Christian Commitment that Carnell clarifies the relationship between saving and vital faith.

Saving faith is formed of three distinct, but complementary, elements: knowledge (the evidences of Christ's active and passive obedience are objectively sufficient); assent (I need what Christ has done, for I am a sinner); and cordial trust (I commit myself to Christ, firmly assured that he will deliver me from judicial suffering and death). Whereas only knowledge and assent belong to generic faith, saving faith is formed of knowledge, assent, and cordial trust.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Carnell, Christian Commitment, 267.

⁴¹ Carnell, Christian Commitment, 267-68.

After restating (and expanding) the formula for saving faith he first proposed in Introduction, Carnell identifies that it is the aspect of “cordial trust” (an element he will identify as part of “vital” faith in Case for Orthodox) which distinguishes saving from generic faith.

To summarize Carnell’s systematic understanding of faith: the two broad subdivisions are general (or generic) faith and vital faith. General faith includes knowledge and assent. General faith is also the realm in which the fruit of knowledge by acquaintance and inference are experienced. Vital faith encompasses all human relationships and includes cordial trust, the distinctive component of saving faith. Vital faith is also the dominion of knowledge by moral self-acceptance. All people experience all of the forms of faith, both general and vital except the specific form of cordial trust in Christ that is the crucial element in saving faith.

Lockean and Kierkegaardian Elements in Carnell

Despite Carnell’s move in the 1950s toward the inclusion of a more subjective understanding of knowledge and faith, he never abandoned assent to propositions as essential in his systematic understanding of belief. Carnell would be quite comfortable with Locke’s insistence that to be a Christian means giving mental assent to the proposition “Jesus is the Messiah,” entailing, as it does for Locke, Christ’s divinity. Carnell’s oft repeated definition of general faith, “the resting of the mind in the sufficiency of the evidences” is fully consonant with (although it perhaps includes more than) Locke’s understanding of faith.

Carnell even comments on the same passage in James that proved so controversial for Locke.

As for the devils believing and trembling, the Bible says that they did (James 2:19). It does not belittle their believing; it only belittles those who do not go further in their trust than the demons. Demon-faith does not fructify in whole-soul love for God. The demons know that the judgment of God awaits them; they know no remedy for their condition because of their evil natures.⁴²

In at least two ways, Carnell's response is remarkably similar to Locke's. Both Locke and Carnell affirm that what the demons expressed really was genuine faith. Additionally, Carnell's final comment that the demons know no remedy for their condition echoes Locke's assertion that the reason the demons' faith does not save them is that no offer of salvation was ever made to them.⁴³ Where Carnell breaks with Locke is in his statement that "demon-faith does not fructify in whole-soul love for God." For Carnell, assent to the right propositions is one aspect of saving faith, but a cordial trust which results in whole-soul love is a distinct and equally crucial aspect of saving faith.

In summary, Locke's understanding of "faith as mere assent to propositions" seems consonant with Carnell's concept of general faith. There is no indication that Carnell was directly influenced by Locke in

⁴² Carnell, Introduction, 86.

⁴³ Locke, Reasonableness of Christianity, 31 (2) 32

his view of faith, but his concept of general faith is, broadly speaking, Lockean.⁴⁴

In the case of Kierkegaard, the story is very different.⁴⁵

Although it is not a part of the project of this work to prove the influence of Kierkegaard on Carnell, it is important to show how Carnell's view of faith is similar and dissimilar to that of Kierkegaard. An important aspect of this demonstration will be to give examples of the instances where Carnell, in discussing faith, quotes Kierkegaard, approvingly or disapprovingly.

Carnell explicitly acknowledges that Kierkegaard taught him how to use introspection as a method of philosophical inquiry.

I must say it is easy to follow the very one who wanted no followers. Without the stimulation of the Danish gadfly, I probably would never have learned how to ask questions from the perspective of inwardness. It is a pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness to Kierkegaard.⁴⁶

Carnell praises Kierkegaard as the only thinker to systematically develop the role of moral sense in a cosmology.

⁴⁴ Carnell's only reference to Locke in a context where he is discussing faith is a negative one. "We proceed to God by way of an intuitive participation in the moral and spiritual environment, not by way of Lockian precepts." Carnell, Introduction, 141.

⁴⁵ There is no question that Carnell was well acquainted with Kierkegaard and his understanding of faith. His 1949 Ph.D. dissertation from Boston University was entitled, "The Problem of Verification in Soren Kierkegaard." In addition, Carnell wrote his Th.D. dissertation at Harvard Divinity School on Reinhold Niebuhr, a figure widely regarded as having been influenced by Kierkegaard. See Carnell, The Case for Biblical Christianity, 186.

⁴⁶ Carnell, Christian Commitment, 73.

To my present knowledge, only Socrates, Pascal, and Kierkegaard made any real attempt to relate the moral sense to the wider problems of philosophy. But only Kierkegaard went on to develop his convictions into the rough outlines of a complete world view.⁴⁷

In his summative evaluation of Kierkegaard's thought (a chapter called "Yes and No"), Carnell endorses Kierkegaard's notion that only God should receive absolute passion.

Kierkegaard very effectively replied that nothing less than the assurance of eternal happiness could appease the human breast. This truth should not only be acknowledged, but it should serve as a guide in life. A wise and consistent Christian will give an absolute devotion to an absolute telos, and a relative devotion to a relative telos. To reverse the elements in the teleology by giving absolute devotion to the relative and relative devotion to the absolute, is sin at its worst. In other words, this world deserves, and thus should receive, no more than relative passion; while the world above -- and this includes everything which pertains to both the life and the will of God -- deserves, and thus should receive, absolute passion.⁴⁸

But in the same evaluative setting, Carnell criticizes Kierkegaard's association of faith with risk.

Although Kierkegaard said many fine things about faith, he was rather disappointing when he attempted to define the relation between faith and public evidences.⁴⁹ He was so terrified by the prospect of complacency that he ended up asserting that faith is based on risk. He even went so far as to contend that the greater the risk, the greater the faith.

This was an unfortunate position to take, for with a little use of the imagination we can easily think of a paradox which is more offensive than the so-called absolute

⁴⁷ Carnell, Christian Commitment, 73.

⁴⁸ Carnell, The Burden of Soren Kierkegaard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1965), 166.

⁴⁹ By "public evidences" Carnell means "evidence for the truth of Christianity that is public" in the sense of equally accessible to all (such as theistic proofs or historical records).

paradox, the incarnation. As long as there is no decisive relation between faith and public evidences, the imagination can devise new risks indefinitely. For example, what is to prevent us from asserting that Christ had two heads and spoke Chinese fluently--all in addition to what Kierkegaard had in mind when he referred to the absolute paradox? This hypothesis ought to increase our faith because it increases the risk we must take when we believe. But the fallacy in such a position is obvious--and it should have been obvious to Kierkegaard too.⁵⁰

Where Carnell breaks with Kierkegaard is over the role for logical arguments for Christianity and whether they are an aid or a hindrance to faith. Although Carnell does not name him in the following passage, it seems likely he had Kierkegaard at least partially in mind.

Zealots often contend that faith requires a leap of the will or a risk of the intellect. Orthodoxy repudiates this in the name of both common sense and revelation. To believe on insufficient evidence--what is this but to believe what may not be true?

People make mistakes when they believe. They may even want something so badly that passion creates its own evidences. Reprehensible though these habits are, they nonetheless fall within the pale of man's general effort to conform the self to things as they are. But when a person acknowledges the deficiency of evidences and yet goes right on believing, he defends a position that is large with the elements of its own destruction.⁵¹ Any brand of inanity can be justified on such a principle.

So while generally applauding Kierkegaard and appropriating his method of introspective inwardness and the element of passionate commitment, Carnell cannot accept that saving faith is irrational or even fundamentally a-rational. For Carnell, "passion should be guided by the seriousness and truth of the object, and not by its rational

⁵⁰ Carnell, Christian Commitment, 169.

⁵¹ Carnell, Introduction, 24.

offensiveness."⁵² This is a view that Carnell never abandoned or even greatly softened. In the final completely original book before his death, Carnell still insists that saving faith is based on evidence and history.⁵³

But this does not mean that faith is a subjective leap which has no organic connection with information. On the contrary, a sinner confronts Christ in and through the Scriptures, and the Scriptures witness to a body of redemptive events that are as much a part of history as the voyage of Columbus.⁵⁴

So Carnell accepts major tenets of both Locke and Kierkegaard. He holds a Locke-like view of the role that reason and assent to propositions play in saving faith and he also advocates a Kierkegaard-like passionate personal commitment which takes an individual where reason alone cannot; into a current, experiential relationship with God. Where Carnell parts company with both thinkers is in their exclusion (largely tacit in Locke but explicit in Kierkegaard) of the necessity of the opposite pole for there to be true saving faith.

⁵² Carnell, Christian Commitment, 77.

⁵³ The final book published in his lifetime, The Burden of Soren Kierkegaard, was a reworking of his Boston University dissertation and his last book, The Case for Biblical Christianity, was a posthumously published compilation of previously published articles and book chapters.

⁵⁴ Carnell, The Kingdom of Love and the Pride of Life (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1960), 145. It should be noted that Carnell is not here trying to distinguish between two kinds of history, redemptive and normal. Rather he is saying the opposite; that the redemptive acts of God took place in the same flow as the rest of history.

Summary

Carnell's systematic classification of the types of faith begins with two broad categories, general and vital faith. General faith encompasses knowledge and assent and is also the domain of knowledge by acquaintance and inference. Vital faith is the currency of human interaction including knowledge by moral self-acceptance and cordial trust in God. This understanding is consonant both with Locke's faith as assent to propositions and Kierkegaard's faith as passionate commitment. Chapter 5 will explore several adjustments which can be made to the faith understanding of Carnell to form an adequate basis for a theory of evangelical Christian education.

Chapter 5

A Reconstructed Understanding of Faith as Trust

It will now be possible to propose a reconstructed view of faith which can serve as the basis for a constructive critique of evangelical education. In the main, Carnell has captured a middle view of faith which speaks to the two distinctives of American twentieth-century evangelicalism: rational adherence to specific doctrines and passionate commitment. This work will suggest several adjustments to Carnell's understanding and definition of faith.

Before these adjustments are attempted, a preliminary question should be briefly addressed. Is it appropriate to take aspects of the views of thinkers as diverse as Locke and Kierkegaard and merge them into some mediate view? First it should be acknowledged that neither Locke nor Kierkegaard would likely approve of the present project. This should not pose any great concern unless the whole history of scholarship is to be summarily condemned. It is the role of scholars, in part, to sort, sift and reconfigure past ideas proposing new, and it is hoped, helpful adjustments and additions.

But a second aspect of this question of intellectual propriety is less easily dismissed. Are the various aspects of the views of thinkers like Locke and Kierkegaard so internally interdependent that to take one aspect of a thinker's view, for example Kierkegaard's faith as passionate commitment, while excluding or severely modifying other aspects of the thinker's view, such as Kierkegaard's understanding of faith as a-rational, does such damage to the overall concept as to

render the procedure epistemically untenable? This objection might be valid if the purpose of going to the particular thinker was to faithfully translate their view into a theory of Christian education or to take their own basic theory and make minor adjustments or improvements.

These, however, are not the roles either Locke or Kierkegaard are designed to play in this dissertation. Locke's and Kierkegaard's views of faith have been considered for only three reasons. First, they shed light on the current polarity of views in the Lordship salvation debate because Locke and Kierkegaard are ideal poles or extreme examples. By looking at their views we can more clearly see the polarity of the less extreme or more subtly nuanced views of present evangelicals. Second, views similar to those of Locke and Kierkegaard were influences on E. J. Carnell and help to clarify his understanding of faith. Finally, certain specific aspects of the faith theories of Locke and Kierkegaard will be employed in this chapter as adjustments to the mediating theory of Carnell.

None of these uses of Locke and Kierkegaard seem to hinge on whether one is being faithful to the full context of the views in the original writers.¹ What is of concern here is how these writers' ideas can illumine or nuance the faith theories of current evangelical theorists. No evangelical, including the current writer, will likely be found

¹ An effort was made, particularly in Chapter 3, to explore relevant aspects of that context when considering the writers' own works.

who has a precisely Locke-like nor an exactly Kierkegaard-like view of faith.²

It is now possible to turn to the three proposed adjustments to Carnell's view of faith. Of the three, one each will be taken from the view of faith found in Locke and Kierkegaard and one will be proposed by this writer.

Three Adjustments to Carnell

Miracle, the Condition of Faith

A crucial element that will be added to Carnell's understanding of faith is Kierkegaard's concept that the move to become a Christian involves a miracle. Carnell gives at least one indication that this idea would not be completely hostile to his systematic analysis of faith. Near the conclusion of The Kingdom of Love and the Pride of Life, Carnell identifies the role of God, the Holy Spirit, in vital saving faith.

Unless the heart is illuminated by the Holy Spirit, of course, it cannot come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is manifestly wrong, therefore, to think that vital faith can be generated by the force of cleverly devised arguments. A sinner comes to Christ because he has been confronted by Christ. He trusts a living person, not a body of information.³

This is consonant with (if not in fact actually influenced by) Kierkegaard's insistence that only God can teach us that we have lost the condition of learning the truth through sin. The divine Teacher

² If a contemporary theorist did correspond fully to one pole or the other, it could be argued that the writer would not therefore fit one or more aspects of the four-fold definition of evangelical given in Chapter 1.

³ Carnell, Kingdom, 144.

both causes the learner to understand that she is in Error (sin) and gives the occasion for her to learn the Truth.⁴ This is accomplished through a miracle performed by God in time, in the life of the one who becomes a Christian. While Carnell does identify God (the Holy Spirit) as the agent of illumination and does deny that this can come by a rational means (clever arguments), he stops short of identifying this work of the Holy Spirit as a miracle. He also does not identify exactly what the heart is illumined to understand or see. So from Kierkegaard, Carnell's view can be enhanced by the explicit understanding that a necessary condition of saving faith is the miracle of God, the Holy Spirit, providing the individual with the knowledge of his or her sin and confronting that person with the living Person of Christ.

This, then, is the first adjustment to be made to Carnell's understanding of faith. A necessary component in the move from the kind of vital faith where one trusts another human being to the attitude of cordial trust necessary for salvation is that God (as a supernatural gift) gives the knowledge of sin and true moral guilt and creates the opportunity (the condition) for the individual to come into a relationship with Christ. This addition corresponds to the prevalent evangelical understanding of three biblical statements: Paul's assertion, "No one understands, no one seeks for God";⁵ Jesus' promise, "When he [the

⁴ It is not being argued that Kierkegaard had in mind that the condition was the Holy Spirit (or a work of the Holy Spirit), rather that this is an addition to Carnell which is consistent with Kierkegaard's notion that God must provide a condition for faith that has been lost as a result of sin.

⁵ Rom. 3:11 (RSV).

Spirit of truth] comes, he will convince the world of sin";⁶ and the explanation to the Ephesians, "For it is by grace you have been saved, though faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."⁷ Many evangelicals understand these passages to mean that because of sin no person can unaided will to acknowledge her sin and seek God's forgiveness. Therefore a gift of faith is given by the Holy Spirit to allow an individual to face his own sinfulness, exercise saving faith, and enter into a personal relationship with God through Christ.

Without this adjustment, Carnell has left himself open to the interpretation that all of the components of faith, general, vital, and that which is unique to saving faith, are natural human possessions or attainments. The above quote could be interpreted to mean only that there was some particular information that humans cannot know unaided. His use of the word "knowledge" might suggest this. Or, alternatively, Carnell's use of the term "heart" could be understood to mean that there is no cognitive information given, but some affective influence, perhaps enabling the will to make the decision to accept Christ. Understood in either of these ways, this "illumination" would be a minor (though necessary) component of salvation, but not necessarily an element of faith itself.⁸ This proposal is adding the

⁶ John 16:8 (RSV).

⁷ Eph. 2:8 (NIV).

⁸ Carnell does quote Eph. 5:8 but not in the context of a discussion of faith. His usage leaves it unclear whether he interpreted this passage as teaching that only grace is a gift or whether he took the other common evangelical stance that both grace and the faith to receive the grace are

element of a supernatural enabling which leads an individual to acknowledge that she is hopelessly caught in sin and to have the opportunity, through an encounter with Christ, to choose to exercise the cordial trust element of saving faith. This addition is built on the assumption that miracle and freedom are not inherently contradictory; that God can supernatural provide the opportunity (condition) without forcing the individual into cordial trust.⁹

This is the primary distinction between general and vital faith in this adjusted version of Carnell. It is not that the faith itself is psychologically a different sort of trust. Rather a miracle is required before the non-believer is able to place her faith salvifically in God.

Miracles as a Basis for Faith

The second adjustment of Carnell's view of faith also has to do with miracles but of a different sort and to a very different conclusion. This adjustment to faith as trust comes from Locke's A Discourse of Miracles and his discussion of miracles in A Third Letter Concerning

gifts of God. See Carnell, Christian Commitment, 292-93 and Carnell, Introduction, 245.

⁹ To this writer the idea of "forced cordial trust" seems oxymoronic. The current proposal is consonant with the understanding of Kierkegaard's view of Miracle argued in Chapter 3. If, however, Wisdo is right, then this proposal would be an addition of the concept of free will at the moment of salvation to Kierkegaard's concept of Miracle. It should be noted that the definition of miracle being employed here does not require God to change something in the physical, material world. If freedom, will, choice, and understanding are aspects of human nature which reside wholly or partially in the soul (or spirit) or in any other not material component of humanity, then this is presuming that God can and does perform miracles in that realm, doing that which is contrary or outside the nature of humans as created and fallen. Obviously, by some definitions of miracle or supernatural (such as miracle = an intrusion of the spiritual world into the physical), this change in the soul would not qualify as a miracle.

Toleration. In chapter two it was shown that Locke believed miracles (particularly the miracles performed by Christ) could authenticate a revelation as coming from God. This differs greatly from the preceding adjustment inspired by Kierkegaard in several respects. Whereas Kierkegaard's concept of the condition is something in human experience (the experience of every human who comes to true faith), Locke's understanding of miracles has to do exclusively with objective historical events. Locke is not interested in the relation between the miracle and its effect on those who originally witnessed them, rather it is the evidential value for us who did not live at the time of Christ and therefore could not have been eyewitnesses to the miracles he performed during His earthly life. Locke is trying to establish a means by which one can rationally accept a proposition such as "Jesus is the Messiah." For Locke, the well attested miracles performed by Christ serve that purpose.

That certain biblical miracles (and the historical evidence attesting to them) can be a rational basis to believe in Christianity or the Bible is a commonly held view by twentieth century American evangelicals but is strangely nearly missing in Carnell's own apologetic system.¹⁰ The particular miracle which many evangelicals take as the most adequate basis for faith in the biblical revelation is the resurrection of Christ.

¹⁰ Carnell does briefly treat the theoretical worth of miracles in Introduction, p. 268 but does not make it an aspect of his understanding of faith. This may evidence the influence of Cornelius Van Til under whom Carnell studied apologetics at Westminster Seminary. See Sims, 5. Van Til, a presuppositionalist, did not believe evidential apologetics should be used to commend belief to the non-Christian.

Oddly, Locke excludes this miracle from those which may be the rational basis for one's faith. Rather Locke relegates the idea "that the dead shall rise, and live again" as being matters purely of faith "with which reason has directly nothing to do."¹¹ One suspects Locke may have been inconsistent at this point considering that one of the miracles attributed to Jesus during his lifetime was the raising of Lazarus. It would seem that this miracle could either be one of those well attested and therefore a rational basis for faith in the biblical revelation or it could be above reason but not both.

Regardless, many twentieth century evangelicals find it rational to take the "well-attested" (historically probable) event of Christ's resurrection as a basis for faith in the rest of the biblical account. This is the form of the notion with which will now be used to adjust Carnell's view of faith. Carnell defined the rational aspect of faith as the "resting of the mind in the sufficiency of the evidences." From Locke is being added the claim that well-attested biblical miracles are a legitimate form of evidence within which the mind can rest.¹²

It should be noted that although the adjustments coming from both Kierkegaard and Locke employ the term, "miracle," these are quite distinct, even opposite, understandings of the term. For Locke the miracles in question are objective historical events. These are apprehended rationally as a result of being "well-attested."

¹¹ Locke, Essay Concerning, 423.

¹² This is, of course, antithetical to Kierkegaard's insistence that probabilistic evidences can never be the basis for Christian faith.

Understanding these miracles leads to cognitive acceptance that certain propositions about Christianity are true. But for Kierkegaard, the miracle is subjective, happening in the life of each believer. A grasping of this miracle leads not to objective knowledge but rather to a subjective encounter with Christ. Both are important to this reconstructed understanding of faith: one as an objective basis for trust, the other as the subjective prerequisite to trust.

Trust, the Commonality of Faith

A third concept which will be used to adjust Carnell's understanding of faith is trust as a unifying principle. This is suggested by Carnell when he repeatedly includes the concept of trust in his overall definitions of faith.¹³ As has been shown, Carnell affirmed the continuity between the various types of faith. However he never explicitly articulated any overriding principle that was the thread of commonality among all the forms of faith.

That there is a connection between ordinary faith and vital faith and between vital faith and saving faith is a common position among current evangelical theologians. Millard Erickson argues that ordinary belief is a necessary component of interpersonal trust.

That there must be belief before there can be trust is evident from our own experiences. Suppose I have to make a bank deposit in cash, but am unable to do so in person. I must ask someone else to do this for me. But whom will I ask? To whom will I entrust myself, or at

¹³ In Introduction, faith is a "whole-soul trust in God's word as true" (p. 66); in Christian Commitment, it is a "cordial trust in the person and work of Christ" (p. 266); in Case for Orthodox, it is simply "the capacity of belief or trust" (p. 23).

least a portion of my material possessions? I will trust or commit myself to someone whom I believe to be honest. Believing in that person depends upon believing something about him. I will probably select a good friend whose integrity I do not question. If my situation is so desperate that I must ask for help from a stranger, I will certainly make at least some sort of preliminary assessment of his honesty, crude and incomplete though such a judgment must necessarily be.¹⁴

Not only does Erickson view ordinary faith as a part of vital faith but he also affirms that assent to propositions is a part of saving faith. He concludes that "the type of faith necessary for salvation involves both believing that and believing in, or assenting to facts and trusting in a person. It is vital to keep these two together."¹⁵ Erickson further warns that these have often been separated in Christian thought.

Sometimes in the history of Christian thought one of the aspects of faith has been so strongly emphasized as to make the other seem rather insignificant. There is frequently a correlation between one's view of faith and one's understanding of the nature of revelation. When revelation is thought of as the communication of information, faith is regarded as intellectual assent to doctrine. Such was the case in Protestant scholasticism. When revelation is conceived of as the self-presentation of God in a personal encounter, as in neoorthodoxy, faith is regarded as personal trust in the God one encounters. The position we took earlier in this work, however, is that revelation is not an either/or matter. God reveals himself, but he does so, at least in part, through communicating information (or propositions) about himself, telling us who he is. Our view of revelation leads us to stress the twofold nature of faith: giving credence to affirmations and trusting God.¹⁶

¹⁴ Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 193.

¹⁵ Erickson, 193.

¹⁶ Erickson, 940.

Baptist theologians Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest also affirm the necessary connection between assent and commitment. They state that genuine "Christian encounter and commitment are directed to the transcendent Christ by hearing and assenting to the truth of the Gospel."¹⁷ Charles Ryrie concurs that saving faith must include holding certain things to be true.

Faith means confidence, trust, to hold something as true. Of course, faith must have content, there must be confidence or trust about something. To have faith in Christ unto salvation means to have confidence that He can remove the guilt of sin and grant eternal life.¹⁸

Ryrie argues that there is a continuity in the meaning among the different forms of the New Testament word for faith.

Normally the New Testament word for believe (pisteuo) is used with the preposition eis (John 3:16), indicating reliance or confident trust in the object. Sometimes it is followed by epi, emphasizing the trust as laying hold on the object of faith (Rom. 9:33; 10:11). Sometimes it is followed by a clause which introduces the content of the faith (10:9). The verb is used with a dative in Romans 4:3. But whatever the form, it indicates reliance on something or someone.¹⁹

After delineating three facets of faith (intellectual, emotional and volitional), Ryrie concludes that "while these three facets may be distinguished, they must be integrated when saving faith takes place. The person believes in Christ with all his being, not just his intellect or

¹⁷ Lewis and Demarest, 112.

¹⁸ Charles C. Ryrie, Basic Theology (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 326.

¹⁹ Ryrie, 326.

emotions or will."²⁰ Lewis and Demarest succinctly conclude that "faith in persons requires knowledge just as does faith in things. Faith is not belief without evidence, but trust without reservation."²¹

With this common evangelical understanding of faith it is now possible to propose a definition designed to bridge the various aspects of faith into a unified principle under the rubric of trust. It is the contention of this work that trust, properly defined, can form the backbone or the unifying principle that is present in all the forms of faith previously articulated.

Definition. For the purposes of this dissertation, the following definition is proposed:

Trust =

The placing of a relational commitment by an individual toward another (being or entity) for an expected result.

It is proposed that this definition can serve to illumine a continuum of trust events²² from the simple and prosaic (Ruth trusts the chair not to collapse under her) to the manifold and exalted (Ruth entrusts her eternal life to God). This definition is explicitly intended to bridge the common distinction between faith that (a proposition is true)

²⁰ Ryrie, 326.

²¹ Lewis and Demarest, 101-2.

²² I am using the term "trust event" to indicate that trust is both relational and has duration which can range from nearly a whole lifetime (I trust my mother for love) to a mere moment (and be immediately ruptured by the failure of the trusted object as in "I trust this stove for sufficient coolness that I may touch it without being burned").

and faith in (a person). It is proposed that the trust involved in both instances is the same.

Several terms in the definition might benefit from further explanation. "Relational" means that trust cannot exist in the abstract; trust is always in someone or something.²³ "Commitment" expresses the idea that trust involves an exercise of will. While there may be logical and/or emotional reasons why we choose to trust, the movement of trust itself has an inherent volitional component. "Being" and "entity" are meant to include all possible personal and impersonal objects of trust. Beings would include all persons and God; entities would encompass animals, plants, mechanisms, and also ideas and propositions. Finally, "expected result" includes the highly specific (Michael trusts in Sarah for a ride to class) and the generalized (Winston trusts in his mate for continued love). Expected results can be explicit and conscious (Horatio's daughter trusts him for the requested ride to the bus stop Friday morning) or implicit and unconscious (Clarice trusts that the car will not explode when she turns the ignition key).

Analysis. In each example above there were at least two discrete components to trust. In each case an individual was placing trust toward an object for an expected result. There are always 'toward'

²³ For the purposes of this discussion, I am considering a proposition to be "something." Therefore it is meaningful to say, "I trust the statement, 'Socrates is a man' for truth." Or (to put it more simply), "I trust that the statement, 'Socrates is a man' is true." (Propositions are considered to be a subset of "entities" as the term is used in this definition.)

and 'for' components to trust (although the components are often implicit or implied). This is consistent with Locke's understanding of faith as rational assent to propositions.

This "toward" and "for" distinction will be extremely important to avoid potential pitfalls in the analysis of trust events. An example might be the following statements:

A. Laura believes two plus two will always equal four
and

B. Hank believes Bill Clinton.

At first it would seem that A and B involve radically different meanings of the word "believe." However, both beliefs involve trust²⁴ (as previously defined) and there is substantial continuity in the operation of trust in each case by means of a "toward and for" analysis. In the case of Laura, her belief involves trust in the proposition $2 + 2 = 4$ for the property of being true. Additionally, this statement seems to include that this truth value will never change and may imply that she trusts in the statement for some sort of correspondence to the real world (this is not certain). However, the analysis of the component of trust in Hank's belief is more complex. To begin with, the object of Hank's trust is a person, not a proposition, and a public figure whom Hank (let us assume) has never met. So the object each extends trusts toward is quite different. But there is an even

²⁴ It is not being argued that belief as used in these two statements is identical to trust or involves nothing but trust, but rather that trust is a major component in belief and that the component of trust fits the given definition in both cases.

greater diversity in what each is trusting their object for. Laura is trusting her object for truth (perhaps including correspondence) but Hank is probably trusting Bill Clinton for a highly complex set of expected results, many of them generalized and/or implicit.²⁵ One implicit trust is that Bill Clinton is a real person (not, for example, a Iranian agent who has had plastic surgery). Another (probably unconscious) trust is that the Clinton of the media corresponds significantly to the actual person. There are probably also more conscious and explicit trusts: Clinton will make a better President than Dole; he told the truth about Whitewater; he will make responsible judicial appointments, etc.

The critical point is that while the object and scope of the trust vary widely between A and B, the psychological event fits the proposed definition in both cases. Both Laura and Hank are trusting in another (being or entity) for an expected result (or complex of results). The great divergence ensues not from a difference in the psychological operation of trust but rather from the nature of the objects trusted in and the results anticipated.

Affect and trust. Up to this point, the discussion of the relation of trust and knowing has been restricted to the manner in which cognitive knowledge is predicated on trust. It should be noted that

²⁵ By generalized I mean that Hank has some conscious expectations which would be verbalized (if at all) in vague and sweeping terms. (An example might be, "Clinton means well" or "Clinton will be good for the country.") "Implicit" means that Hank trusts in a whole series of assumptions which could not be readily verbalized.

'trust,' as it has been defined, is affective, not cognitive; it is essentially a matter of volition. We extend trust as an act of the will, although often instinctively or from habit and without reflection.

Since all cognitive knowledge is dependent on trust, trust can properly be viewed as more epistemologically basic than cognition. This is valid both as a developmental observation and as a statement of epistemic priority. Trust can exist prior to anything that resembles developed conscious cognition (and does so exist, at least in infants). However, conscious cognitive knowledge cannot exist in the absence of trust events. If this proposal is accepted, it would mean a subtle adjustment of Carnell's epistemology. Carnell often argued that the cognitive aspect of faith (believing something to be true) was more basic and was foundational for vital and saving faith. The present proposal argues that there is something more foundational than knowledge by acquaintance or inference. Trust, as defined, is foundational for all of Carnell's ways of knowing because it is present in all of them and none would constitute knowledge if the aspect of trust were somehow completely absent.

Faith as Trust in the Lordship Controversy

In Chapter 1 it was noted that the current heated controversy commonly referred to as the lordship salvation debate revolved around competing understandings of faith. It was shown that Zane Hodges and others in the "free grace" side of the argument tend to emphasize rational assent to doctrinal propositions as the necessary ingredient of saving faith. John MacArthur, Jr. and those who advocate a lordship

understanding of faith, emphasize a radical, wholehearted commitment. In chapters 2 and 3 it was shown that there are similarities between Hodges and Locke and also between MacArthur and Kierkegaard. It also may be wise to reiterate that it is not being claimed that the faith views of Locke and Kierkegaard correspond exactly with those of current evangelicals in the lordship controversy. Rather, Locke and Kierkegaard represent ideal poles or extreme understandings of faith which are meant to illumine current evangelical conceptions.

How would an understanding of faith as trust such as has been proposed in this chapter contribute to the current lordship controversy? First, faith as trust would see faith as embracing both cognitive and experiential dimensions. It is important for faith to be informed and to be a passionate, whole-person commitment.

Initially this formulation would seem that the faith-as-trust view would be solidly in the lordship camp. MacArthur acknowledges that certain doctrinal beliefs are a part of being a Christian, whereas Hodges denies that a decision or volitional commitment is necessary for saving faith. So it would seem that a view that held both dimensions as integral to faith would favor a lordship-like view.

It will be proposed, rather, that faith as trust can find a position which is between the lordship and free grace camps. This view agrees with Hodges that accepting certain propositions as true is a necessary part of saving faith. Just as necessary is a whole life commitment. But of what does this commitment consist? MacArthur states that this

commitment is "a determination--to abandon stubborn disobedience and surrender the will to Christ."²⁶ He amplifies that "repentance calls for a repudiation of the old life."²⁷ If this means only that the will is turned away from trust of self or a life of intentional sin, then faith as trust must entail as much. However, the context of the rest of MacArthur's book suggests that he has in mind particular sinful behaviors which must be repudiated and particular actions which must cease for Christ to be Lord.²⁸ This is how Hodges and many others read MacArthur. If MacArthur has this stronger sense of repentance in mind, and it is likely he does, then faith as trust stops short of MacArthur's concept of repentance.

Saving faith involves a passionate commitment of all that I have to give to all that I know of Christ.²⁹ This focuses on the attitude involved in faith, rather than specific behavior changes. If one knows little of how her life displeases God, or if she has little control of herself through addiction or other emotional impairment, then a passionate commitment would involve giving only a small portion of herself (but still all she possesses). Likewise, if her knowledge of

²⁶ MacArthur, Gospel, 164.

²⁷ MacArthur, Gospel, 162.

²⁸ MacArthur stops short of ever giving a list of particular behaviors which must stop.

²⁹ The phrase, "Coming to Christ is giving all of myself that I know to all of God that I know" is common in evangelical circles but this writer has not been able to trace the quote to a specific origin. Some have suggested that Robert Munger coined it, but it is not easily found in any of his extant published works.

Christ was minimal or faulty (a common condition for one just becoming a Christian), then she can only give herself to the Christ she knows. Here it is important to remember the adjustment which was made to Carnell from Kierkegaard. If God is giving the condition, if none comes to true saving faith without this accompanying miracle, then the quality of her understanding of who God is (or even her unconscious emotional picture of God) is not decisive. God gives the condition, both of the consciousness of her need (sin) and the ability to respond in faith. Her part in faith is to take the opportunity now restored to her and respond with all she possesses (however much or little that might be).

This understanding of faith as trust is certainly more than the free grace advocates conceive, since it includes an a-cognitive component, passionate commitment. But it is also likely less demanding than many in the Lordship camp advocate, since no particular standard for repentance is demanded.

Summary

Three additional elements have been proposed as enhancements to Carnell's middle view of faith. The first is the addition of a Kierkegaard-like concept of Miracle as a condition for true saving faith. The second proposed enhancement is that biblical miracles can be a rational basis for faith in the Christian revelation. The third is a conception of trust as the underlying principle active within each of the forms of faith outlined by Carnell. This adjusted understanding has been employed to delineate a middle view of saving faith which

includes more than the free grace position but is probably less demanding than most lordship positions.

This chapter has proposed three adjustments to Carnell's understanding of faith which renders it more adequate as a basis for building a theory of evangelical Christian education. The final chapter will critique examples of evangelical writers and curricula and propose the outlines of such a theory.

CHAPTER 6

A Theory of Evangelical Education Based on Faith as Trust

This chapter will take the understanding of faith as trust articulated in Chapter 5 and apply it to contemporary evangelical Christian educational theory and practice. This will be accomplished first by critiquing several representative evangelical educational writers, second by analyzing two examples of Sunday school curricula popular with evangelical churches, third by reviewing a new international school curriculum, and finally by outlining the broad dimensions of a theory of education based on the principle of faith as trust.

Tendencies in Twentieth-Century Evangelical Education

Many American Protestants of various denominations have attempted to develop a philosophy of Christian education. These have included:

the Missouri Synod and other Lutherans, the Mennonites, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Christian Reformed Church, the Protestant Episcopalians, some of the liberal and neo-orthodox Protestants, and various conservative groups, such as the National Association of Evangelicals and its affiliate, the National Association of Christian Schools with its strenuous promotion of the Christian day school.

However, most evangelicals have allowed pragmatic concerns to overshadow the work of theoretical formulation. J. Edward Hakes notes that "evangelicals have stopped short of spelling out fully their

¹ Frank E. Gaebelin, "Toward a Philosophy of Christian Education," in An Introduction to Evangelical Christian Education, ed. J. Edward Hakes (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 40.

distinctive educational viewpoint."² Many of those engaged in evangelical education "tend to operate according to pragmatic standards which evaluate success by attendance figures rather than by other more educationally defensible criteria."³ Warren Benson concurs that a focus on practical or individualistic priorities has led evangelical education to be characterized by activism and a lack of theoretical reflection. Evangelicals in this century "have been reactive and action oriented rather than polemical and theoretical."⁴ Evangelical educators' concern for numerical growth and the vigor of individuals' Christian experience "often has superseded a reflectively developed philosophy of education."⁵

Ronald Habermas and Klaus Issler have recently charged that "the church has settled for a truncated version of its divine instructional task."⁶ Because theory drives practice, and evangelical Christian educators have often neglected theoretical formulation, evangelical practice is often weak. They warn that "unless we reclaim a truer,

² J. Edward Hakes, "Evangelical Christian Education and the Protestant Day-School Movement", in An Introduction to Christian Education, ed. Marvin J. Taylor (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 325.

³ Hakes, "Evangelical Christian Education", 325.

⁴ Benson, 53.

⁵ Benson, 53.

⁶ Ronald Habermas and Klaus Issler, Teaching for Reconciliation: Foundations and Practice of Christian Educational Ministry, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 16.

fuller picture of Christian education, we will continue in our bewildered state of hit-or-miss teaching and random learning.”⁷

This lack of reflection has led to distortion of both evangelical educational theory and practice. In Chapter 1 it was shown that an appropriate definition of what it means to be an evangelical Christian includes the distinguishing marks of rationalism and experience. It was also shown that these two marks are often out of balance in those evangelicals debating the nature of faith. Chapters 2 and 3 explored historical precedents and pure types of this unbalanced understanding of faith and drew parallels to current evangelical understandings of faith. Chapters 4 and 5 showed how a mediating view of faith could be constructed by using insights of E. J. Carnell.

Previous chapters have focused on theorists who wrote directly about faith. But as has been shown above, many evangelical Christian educational theorists and practitioners are weak in the area of theological reflection (concerning faith as well as other areas of theology). But evangelical educators’ understanding of the nature of the Gospel and of faith is often reflected in their practice, even when not explicitly considered. When the focus of a theory of Christian education is predominately on the priority or methodology for transmitting Biblical or doctrinal content, this is an indication of a weakness in seeing faith as passionate commitment. Likewise if a theorist or practitioner emphasizes the student’s vital experience but neglects significant

⁷ Habermas and Issler, 16.

content, this also betrays an understanding of faith deficient in emphasis on the importance of assent to propositions.

This section will explore two types of imbalance among evangelical educational theorists: seeing the educational task as predominately cognitive and failing to give adequate intentionality to the cognitive aspect of faith development. Finally two examples will be offered of theorists who approximate a more balanced view of faith.

James Wilhoit of Wheaton College characterizes this century in evangelical education as a move from dependence on the schooling model in the 1920s to a greater interest in learner-centered and participatory approaches since the 1960s. Wilhoit cites two reasons for the popularity of an educational approach which was largely dependent on Sunday school during the first part of the century. The first factor was the popularity of the Keswick, deeper life movement (and its advocacy by Charles Trumbull, editor of the Sunday School Times). The second reason for emphasis on Sunday school was a content orientation that grew out of the evangelical emphasis on Bible teaching.

[The second] reason that the Sunday school was seen as satisfactory was the commitment of the Evangelical movement to teaching the Bible. In many ways, Christian education during this period was reduced to teaching Bible content. Dewey was read, not with an eye toward democracy, not with an eye toward construction of knowledge, but with an eye toward how this could help teach the Bible more effectively.⁸

⁸ James C. Wilhoit, "A Response to Brian Tippen," Religious Education 88 (1993): 616.

Although some evangelical writers still reflect this schooling mentality, there has been a reaction to the heavily content oriented approach and most current evangelical educational theorists lean more toward the more experientially focused, active involvement approach. However, the tendency noted by Wilhoit (and others) toward non-reflective activism has continued.

This section will look at two examples of a content oriented approach to evangelical education and then several with a more active experiential orientation. What is being highlighted in this analysis is not that any of these current theorists fails to include both cognitive and experiential elements.⁹ Rather the contention will be that one or the other pole is seen as central to an understanding of evangelical education and that the opposite pole is neglected or exists largely as a means to the primary emphasis. In each case the theorist will be critiqued suggesting how greater theological reflection, particularly around the concept of a balanced view of faith as trust, could enhance her or his theory and practice of Christian education.

While some of these theorists state their view of faith explicitly, a few even taking a position on the lordship salvation debate, more commonly views of faith are implicit. An assumption of the following analysis is that educators who emphasize learning doctrine or Bible content as the primary goal of Christian education are expressing an

⁹ If any writer totally eliminated or ignored either of these elements she or he would not be an evangelical, at least by the definition developed in Chapter 1 since that definition required that each of the four characteristics be present, at least to some degree, for the individual or group to be classified as evangelical.

inherent bias toward the view that faith is largely a matter giving mental assent to particular propositions (the Trinity, substitutionary atonement, biblical authority, etc.). Likewise an emphasis on non-cognitive objectives (feelings, moral choice, volitional commitment) will be viewed as betraying an understanding of faith (perhaps unconscious or unexamined) that is closer to personal passionate commitment. It is not being argued that educators who emphasize content are good examples of how to communicate content. In fact, part of the analysis of faith as trust is that content devoid of commitment is not adequate. Likewise those who emphasize an experiential active approach to learning are not to be understood as doing a effective job of engendering passionate commitment. Faith as trust explicitly includes the idea that lasting passionate commitment must be built on a solid foundation of cognitive assent to doctrinal propositions. So the identification of the curricula examined below with views that have preceded in this analysis (Locke, MacArthur, etc.) is most clearly in what each ignores or is lacking rather than in an exact correspondence of what each advocates.

Educators Who Emphasize Content

Harold William Burgess traces the evangelical emphasis on content during the first half of the twentieth century to a reaction by evangelicals to liberal theology and progressive education in mainline churches. The evangelical movement which had "supported and guided the Sunday school through its nineteenth century heyday was rendered increasingly rudderless by the emergence of changing

religious and educational views."¹⁰ This new perspective on religious education was "quite out of harmony with the Evangelical approach to religious education, committed as it was to the notion that the communication of a divinely ordained message was the most essential factor in religious education."¹¹ This reactionary emphasis on doctrine and biblical content became the unifying mark of a distinctively evangelical Christian educational approach before 1950. Hakes argues that orthodox doctrine is the continuing mark of evangelical education.

It is impossible to understand evangelicals and their approach to any undertaking, including Christian education, without recognizing how seriously they take their beliefs. Unequivocal affirmation of an orthodox creedal statement is the characteristic which all evangelical educators have in common.¹²

While the majority of evangelical educational writers have moved away from the nearly exclusive emphasis on cognitive content that characterized much of the literature prior to 1950, there are still some theorists and practitioners whose predominant emphasis is on the communication of propositional truth in education and who understand the experiential aspects of education as the results of an emphasis on the cognitive. This section will examine two writers who reflect this more rationalistic emphasis, Roy Zuck and C. Keith Mee.

Roy B. Zuck. In a 1963 book entitled The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching, Roy Zuck defines evangelical Christian education as the

¹⁰ Harold William Burgess, An Invitation to Religious Education (Birmingham, Ala.: Religious Education Press, 1975), 23.
Mishawaka, Ind.;

¹¹ Burgess, 23.

¹² Hakes, "Evangelical Christian Education, 317.

"Christ-centered, Bible-based, pupil-related process of communicating God's written Word through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of leading pupils to Christ and building them up in Christ."¹³

While this definition touches on both cognitive and experiential elements, the remainder of the book demonstrates that for Zuck the focus is first on cognitive understanding of biblical content which will lead (through the work of the Holy Spirit) to the student having an experience with God. Zuck states that Christian education "concerns itself with Bible content because through it persons are brought into direct, personal contact with the living God".¹⁴

In a chapter entitled, "The Bible as the Basic Content," Zuck asserts that the Bible is the source of both the content and methodology of Christian education. He argues that since the Bible is the authority for Christian education, "it is the source of educational principles. But it is also the essential content of Christian education."¹⁵ For Zuck, this means that the primary job of Christian education is the transmission of content, rather than drawing out or developing something innate in the learner.

For this reason, Christian education is transmissive. Christian teachers have a Book to teach, God's divine Word to communicate, a written revelation to make known. God's truths are not hidden in the inner recesses

¹³ Roy B. Zuck, The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching (Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Publications, 1963), xi. This book is a revision of Zuck's doctoral dissertation completed at Dallas Seminary in 1961.

¹⁴ Zuck, The Holy Spirit, 101.

¹⁵ Roy B. Zuck, Spiritual Power in Your Teaching (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 104. This book is a new edition, with only minor revisions of The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching.

of man's nature, to be drawn out by experienced teachers. Nor are they there in seminal form, waiting to be developed under the influence of proper environment. God's truth is to be perpetuated by transmissive teaching, as clearly indicated in verses such as Exodus 10:2; Deuteronomy 6:6-9, 20; 31:11-13; Psalm 78:2-7; Luke 24:27, 32; Acts 8:4, 28:31; and 2 Timothy 2:2, 3:15.¹⁶

Zuck understands the truth which is to be transmitted as predominantly propositional in nature "containing statements or propositions of truth about God and His dealings with man."¹⁷ For Zuck a purely relational or existential revelation is unrealizable. "It is impossible for God to reveal Himself to man without revealing at the same time something of His character, attributes, or purposes."¹⁸ But an emphasis on transmissive content does not mean that lessons have to be boring or unrelated to the students' own experiences.

Transmissive Bible teaching is decried by many schools of thought as unsound and unrealistic. It is claimed that the transmission of Bible truth makes teaching noncreative, limits the content to a prescribed "given" body of content, and is irrelevant to pupil's experiences. But divine authority demands human creativity. There is no reason why Bible teaching cannot be an exciting creative venture. When man has discovered God's truth, what would be the value of continuing the search?

According to Zuck, "the 'given' truth in Christian education liberates man into true Christian freedom (Jn 8:44)". Although it is

¹⁶ Zuck, Spiritual Power, 104. "The content of the written Word of God is important because it makes plain God's will for man. Christian education concerns itself with Bible content because through it persons are brought into direct, personal contact with the living God."

¹⁷ Zuck, Spiritual Power, 105.

¹⁸ Zuck, Spiritual Power, 105.

propositional, "Christian truth is life-transforming."¹⁹ Therefore transmissive truth is relevant to every learner.

For Zuck, experience of God comes through the agency of propositional content about God. He interprets the biblical view as being that persons come "to know God experientially only by means of knowing Him conceptually." He asserts that "experiential knowledge of God is possible only through conceptual knowledge of God."²⁰ It is the Holy Spirit which changes propositional content into personal Christian experience.

Conceptualism becomes experientialism only when the pupil is receptive to the ministry of the Spirit. Valid Christian experience (whether it pertains to spiritual birth into the Christian life or to growth within the Christian life) cannot be obtained or maintained apart from valid Christian truth.²¹

Christian education curriculum should be based on the Bible because "the Scriptures constitute the basic content for Christian education."²² There can be no exceptions. Zuck insists that "all curriculum materials and activities are to be faithful to and based squarely on the foundation of biblical truth."²³ Zuck summarizes his philosophy of Christian education with the following sweeping statements: "The Bible is the 'given,' the body of content to be transmitted. It is the 'basis' of all

¹⁹ Zuck, Spiritual Power, 105.

²⁰ Zuck, Spiritual Power, 107.

²¹ Zuck, Spiritual Power, 107.

²² Zuck, Spiritual Power, 108.

²³ Zuck, Spiritual Power, 108.

evangelical Christian education."²⁴ For Zuck, the Christian educator begins with transmissive content which the Holy Spirit takes and applies to the student, resulting in an experience with God. Zuck believes that "transmissive teaching has a built-in power because of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit."²⁵ If this transmissive, content-centered approach leads to dead orthodoxy, it is not evidence that the teachers should de-emphasize content. Rather they should seek the power of the Holy Spirit to make the content come alive for the students.

Ineffective transmissive teaching does not imply that teachers should discard content. Instead, it means they should seek to teach Bible content in the power and dynamic of God's Spirit.²⁶

This teaching "in the power and dynamic of God's Spirit" does not, for Zuck, imply some change of methodology but rather a spiritual change in the life of the teacher. Teachers must be clean instruments available for God's use.

The Holy Spirit seeks to teach through human channels or instruments. Human teachers should seek to be under the full employment of the Spirit as clean and capable instruments. Effective Christian teaching takes place to the extent that teachers allow the Spirit to speak through them and use them.²⁷

²⁴ Zuck, Spiritual Power, 108.

²⁵ Zuck, The Holy Spirit, 103.

²⁶ Zuck, The Holy Spirit, 103.

²⁷ Zuck, The Holy Spirit, 76.

Then the content of the Bible can reach the student and change the student's life.²⁸

Roy Zuck provides a clear illustration of a major premise of this chapter: that an evangelical educator's understanding of the relative roles of cognitive and affective elements in the purpose and goals of education reflects (consciously or implicitly) his or her conception of faith. Clearly Zuck values both biblical content and personal experience with God. But his focus is on the biblical content: it is the means the Holy Spirit will use to bring about experience with God. It is likely no coincidence that Zuck jumped to the defense of his former Dallas seminary colleagues Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges during the heat of the Lordship salvation debate in the late 1980s.²⁹ Since Zuck does

²⁸ Zuck, The Holy Spirit, 103.

²⁹ Roy Zuck, "Cheap Grace?" in Kindred Spirit, Summer 1989, 6-7. Zuck writes, in part: "Lordship salvation as a gift. If I offer my wife a gift and she gets it, it is no longer a gift. Salvation says a person must commit, surrender in order to receive that gift and be saved gift after all"

Kindred Spirit
See my question in bib. 1 p. 219

salvation as something to someone by self in on is not a

"Lordship teaching seems to advocate of this teaching deny their salvation, the view itself does not give something to be saved, he is adding to salvation. Repeatedly the Bible clearly states that salvation comes only by receiving it by faith. Jesus said to a woman, "Your faith has saved you" (Luke 7:50). He did not say, "Your faith and your commitment have saved you"

"Room for spiritual growth and for spiritual regression in the Christian life is not allowed for -- or at least is de-emphasized -- in lordship salvation. If one commits everything to Christ to be saved, where is there room for growth and development in the Christian life, as the Bible clearly encourages? And what happens if a believer falls into sin?

The lordship gospel does not make much allowance for carnality. Not that carnality is condoned or should go unchallenged. But it is seen in the Bible. To say that every true believer consistently obeys the Lord overlooks examples of many believers in the Bible who lapsed into sin

"A free gift, received by faith. Salvation then is a gift, to be received

not believe that a passionate commitment of the will is necessary for salvation, and does think that holding certain cognitive beliefs is essential for saving faith, it is little wonder that his stress should be on transmission of cognitive understanding as the primary task of Christian education and as the primary means to a personal relationship with God.

Zuck's understanding of the purpose and practice of Christian education could be enhanced by an analysis of his conception from the perspective of a theory of evangelical Christian education based on faith as trust. Zuck does believe that effective Christian education will result in the student having a personal experience with God. Zuck is not opposed to interactive experiential methodologies. But his focus is not on planned facilitation of such experience. Rather content becomes experience as pupils (as well as the teacher) are receptive to the work of the Holy Spirit in bridging the gap between concepts and personal spiritual experience. Put simply, in Zuck's view, the student and God are responsible for the transition to experience but the teacher is primarily responsible for effective transmission of content.

The conception of faith as trust as developed in chapter 5, holds that emotional, volitional, moral and spiritual outcomes are of equal importance with cognitive transmission and therefore all should be a part of the conscious planning of the evangelical educator. Zuck's

by faith or trust in Christ, apart from any additional requirements or demands. A sinner becomes a child of God by faith in Christ as his Savior. Then as a believer he is to grow in Christ, to develop as a disciple, to make Christ Lord or Master of all areas of his life."

view presumes that there is a kind of automatic transfer from cognitive transmission to spiritual transformation.³⁰

In a teaching approach which reflects faith as trust, however, the leader (teacher or facilitator) designs and employs methods and approaches which assist the bridging between cognitive understanding and personal passionate commitment. This could involve the leader modeling behavior consistent with the truth she hopes to teach, engaging the emotions through story and humor, peer discussion and accountability, etc. While Zuck would not deny the value of such methodology, he does place the balance of priority on cognitive transmission. An approach to education consistent with faith as trust may often require scaling back the quantity of cognitive objectives for each session or series. It will often be more important that one central idea be understood, felt, experienced, and passionately embraced than that ten concepts be learned but not applied.

C. Keith Mee. The remaining pockets of a twenties-like schooling approach often reside in an unconscious, pragmatic form. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, evangelical educators in this century have often been action-oriented rather than reflective. Many of those in leadership in evangelical Christian education focus on methodology rather than theory. One example is C. Keith Mee's article,

³⁰ Automatic is used here in the sense that the teacher does not need to consciously work to help this transition take place. The Holy Spirit sovereignly chooses to work and/or the student becomes open to the Spirit's transforming ministry without the teacher's direct assistance (except, of course, in being an open, clean instrument as noted above).

"Instructional Media and Learning."³¹ This article will be critiqued, not because it is a major or influential attempt at educational theory but rather because (in the opinion of this writer) it represents a large number of evangelical practitioners who are more interested in methods than theory.³² At first glance this article appears to be simply a practical "how to" instruction in the proper use of various media, largely devoid of philosophical or theological significance. Perhaps Mee himself viewed the article as a sort of instruction manual for teachers.

But Mee begins with a brief section entitled, "Definition of Media." He starts by quoting his own definition of media from a book he had previously written.³³

"The term 'media' means devices which contain and/or transport information."

A medium is that which serves the function of relaying or facilitating the transfer of items between parties. In our use of the word, the parties are recipients and originators. Recipients are viewers, listeners, readers, learners, teachers, classes and congregations. Originators are authors, actors, photographers, theologians, and economists. In short the originators are persons with messages, ideas, entertainment, and information.

Information is the general word for the item to be transferred. Information comes in many forms: facts,

³¹ C. Keith Mee, "Instructional Media and Learning," in Christian Education: Foundations for the Future, eds. Robert E. Clark, Lin Johnson, and Allyn K. Sloat (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 203-18.

³² Many, if not most, of these practitioners are too busy doing the practical ministry of Christian education to bother to write about it. The view reflected in Mee probably represents many directors of Christian education and Sunday School superintendents in local evangelical churches throughout the United States.

³³ C. Keith Mee, The Learning Team: The Learner, the Leader, and the Library, rev. Ed. (Nashville: Convention, 1987), 27.

definitions, descriptions, ideas, interpretations, instructions, and procedures.³⁴

These definitions betray a (possibly unexamined) understanding of the task of education as the transfer of information. All of the language is cognitive with three possible exceptions. Mee mentions actors in the list of possible originators, leaving open the possibility that drama might be one of the "items" transferred. He includes entertainment as something originators might want to transfer. Mee also includes congregations as one of several possible recipients, making room for worship to be something that might be enhanced by the media transfer.

Even giving Mee the benefit of the doubt on these three items, the definitions are still heavily weighed toward the cognitive. He asserts that media exist in order to transfer information. However media are also a means to communicate emotion, stir conviction, arouse the spirit. The power of filmed or videotaped movies is not primarily that they can inform (although, of course, they can). Their more important role is in the affective realm. Filmed drama (whether historical or fictional) possesses the power to draw us in, to invite us to identify with the characters on the screen, to vicariously feel what they feel.

Mee defines the process of transfer as one-way communication. The medium moves items from the originators to the recipients. What Mee overlooks is that increasingly there are forms of media which facilitate interaction, response and involvement. The computer comes

³⁴ Mee, "Instructional Media," 204.

to mind as an example of a medium which often encourages interaction, either with a prepared software program, or through modems, with other computer users. The primary mention of computer related equipment is in expressing the hope that "mankind's knowledge" may be more permanently preserved on compact discs. In terms of education, the mere archiving of human knowledge may well turn out to be the most basic and, in the end, trivial potential use of the computer.

Mee continues with a section entitled, "Why Use Audiovisuals." Out of the twelve reasons offered, eight are clearly cognitive. Some examples are:

1. Secures attention. Attention spans vary greatly and many people have poor listening skills. Therefore, the first task of the teacher is to gain and hold attention of the learners to stimulate increased learning
3. Makes learning uniform. Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultural experiences and have different vocabularies. Audio visuals enable teachers to build uniformity through mental images
8. Facilitates memory. Symbols, drawings, diagrams, and special treatment of key words³⁵ give us mental hooks to hang facts for later recall.

The language clearly betrays a predominantly cognitive understanding of Christian education: "increased learning," "uniformity of mental images," "hang facts for recall."

Of the remaining four listed reasons to use audiovisuals, two are not clearly cognitive nor involvement oriented. The final two could be

³⁵ Mee, "Instructional Media," 205. These and subsequent quotes of various points are not made in order. Thus this quotation lists points 1, 3 and 8, the next, 7 and 12, etc.

seen as affective (emotional or experiential) reasons for using audio-visuals:

7. Provides substitute experience. We cannot experience everything in life, nor would we want to. However, through audiovisuals we can enter experiences vicariously and develop feelings and some understanding of a variety of situations

12. Makes learning more enjoyable. Satisfaction, self-discovery, anticipation, increased participation, and learning will all contribute³⁶ in making the total experience more fun--more enjoyable.

Even if these are granted as emotional or experiential reasons to use media (Mee is being given the benefit of the doubt here), the list is still predominantly cognitive in nature.

A more balanced approach could be discovered through employing insights derived from an understanding of faith as trust. Looking at media through the lens of an understanding of faith as trust could subtly alter even the definition of media. Media do not have to be seen solely as relayers of knowledge between originator and recipients. With an understanding of faith as trust as the underlying reason why we use media, we would expand the definition in two ways. First, what we are relaying or facilitating is not merely, or even overwhelmingly, information. Admiration for religious heroes, moral indignation at wrong, wonder, longing for meaning and God: all of these are significant aspects of life which can and should be seen as proper "content" for transmission. Second the transmission is not merely from the "originators" (such as Christian education curriculum and professional media designers) and to the lay Christian audience. Rather

³⁶ Mee, "Instructional Media," 205-6. ^{ob.}

communication by media should be increasingly defined as two (or even multiple) way communication.

If we understand the nature of Christian faith as a trust which unites the cognitive assent and passionate commitment dimensions of belief, then we are more likely to be alert to the non-cognitive potential of media. Various forms of media, such as still pictures, films and video have the power to stir imagination and engage emotion differently, and often more deeply than the spoken or written word. Mee makes no mention of ethical issues, but a recognition of the nature of faith as trust would lead us to consider how we are using the potential emotional power of media, particularly of filmed drama (and in the near future, interactive virtual reality drama). Part of the responsibility of any Christian communicator (or learning facilitator) is to discern whether the experience she is helping to occur will be likely to enhance or undermine the participant's future trust in the community of believers and, directly or indirectly, in God. If we use media in a manipulative way (stir emotions to record a "decision" before the person is ready, for example) then we have made an intangible emotional debit in that individual's or group's ability to trust Christians (or possibly God) in the future.

Enhancing informed passionate trust as the goal of Christian education could help us focus on some of the more personal and interactive potential of media. A film or video does not have to be the dominant experience at a church meeting or class. Nor does it need to be relegated merely to an accessory to lecture. Showing a brief (1-10 minute) clip of a commercial movie or television program (comedy,

drama or talk show) can serve as an excellent starter for discussion, either in a large group or pairs.

Although the article was published in 1991, Mee made only a few brief passing references to the growing potential of computer technology. Understanding the goal of Christian education in light of faith as trust would cause the educator to see the computer's potential to isolate individuals from relationship (such as in absorbing single player computer or CD ROM games) or to enhance and enable relationship. Christians are already networking with others from all over the world through e-mail and various special interest forums on the Internet and commercial services such as Genie and CompuServe.³⁷

Mee's article is an example of an overbalance toward considering primarily cognitive issues which probably stems from unreflective pragmatism and a (likely unconscious) distorted view of faith and the goal of evangelical Christian education. This imbalance could be greatly reduced or corrected by creative theological reflection on the purpose, definition, and uses of media seen through the lens of faith as trust.

The contention of this chapter is not that Zuck and Mee exemplify a cognitive position that is as extreme as that of Locke. Both Zuck and Mee acknowledge the importance of a personal relationship with Christ. Rather, it is proposed that by emphasizing the primacy of

³⁷ For example, this writer recently kept in touch with his best friend and colleague, Gary Stanley, while he was teaching for a term in Riga, Latvia. We carried on a detailed, nearly daily correspondence sharing our personal and professional lives via the Internet.

propositional content, both educators neglect an adequate emphasis on personal passionate commitment.

Educators Who Emphasize Experience — also - see wording in context for p. 143

As previously noted, the movement in evangelical Christian educational circles since 1950 has been away from the more content oriented emphasis toward a more student centered, experiential approach. Although many examples of this could be explored, this section will examine three figures, Lawrence Richards, Mary Ellen Drushal and Nicholas Wolterstorff as representative of various aspects of this trend.

It should be clarified that these three theorists are not offered as examples of writers who are explicitly attempting to formulate educational theory or practice based on the ideas of Soren Kierkegaard. No evangelical educational theorist has done this³⁸ although various non-evangelical writers have attempted the task.³⁹ Neither is it being claimed that Kierkegaard would approve of these approaches to Christian education. What the three evangelical educational theorists do have in common is that they emphasize aspects of experiential commitment as being more central to the evangelical educational task and relegate cognitive content to a secondary or derivative status. What the three have in common is that all fail to adequately include

³⁸ In fact if an educational theorist did attempt a thoroughly Kierkegaardian approach to education it would probably disqualify her as being an evangelical given the definition presented in Chapter 1.

³⁹ Two examples of educational theorists building explicitly on Kierkegaard would be Van Cleve Morris, Existentialism in Education: What it Means (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) and Ronald J. Manheimer, Kierkegaard as Educator (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

sufficient emphasis on the place of a Locke-like cognitive propositional understanding.

Lawrence O. Richards. The most serious evangelical attempt to date to write a theology of Christian education is Larry Richards' A Theology of Christian Education. Richards spends more than a third of the book (126 pages out of a total 324) in a section entitled "theological considerations." Although Richards has received (and deserves) credit for undertaking a major project of building a theory of Christian education on serious theological reflection, his work would be more aptly titled, "An Ecclesiology of Christian Education." His entire theological project in this work is to try to discover the nature of the church and explicate the implications of this understanding for Christian education. As Benson observes:

While not a theology in the classical sense of the term, it is a substantial renewal ecclesiology of church life. Taking a clue from Randolph Crump Miller, Richards says that "ecclesiology must be the source of our educational understanding and that Christian education is a truly a theological discipline."⁴⁰

While a thorough assessment of this important volume cannot be accomplished here, Richards represents some of the best, and yet still far from ideal work that has been done in attempting to bridge the gap between philosophy of education and educational practice.

Richards' basic approach is non-cognitive and is centered around the growth process. As Benson notes, Richards insists that the goal of Christian education "is not to be an educational system that produces content knowledge but rather a supplier of what is needed for the

⁴⁰ Benson, 65.

process of growth."⁴¹ Richards develops his theory of the nature and purpose of the church around the idea of life.

It is life and death that define Christ's Church and His people. It is the possession of life that distinguishes a Christian from all other men: it is as a community of men who share the divine life that the Church is set apart from every human institution. And it is understanding our faith as life that gives us the clue to the development of a distinctive and theologically sound Christian education.⁴²

From this underlying premise, Richards develops an ecclesiology and prescription for the proper functioning of the church. Several of these prescriptions will be noted before a critique of Richards' project is made from the viewpoint of faith as trust.

In a chapter on edification within the church, Richards amplifies a part of his growth model. The bulk of education, he notes disapprovingly, is taken up with "helping people know what their teacher knows." But Christian education should concern itself with "helping people become what their teachers are."⁴³ For Richards, education is not primarily about what you know of the Christian faith, but rather the person you are becoming. Richards cites Jesus' discipleship of the Twelve as a model for making disciples in the church context.

The "training" of a disciple focuses on making the disciple a complete person, a mature believer. As Jesus lived with and taught the Twelve, He was concerned about transformation: His goal was the nurture of life

This was no typical "school" where those being trained appeared to listen to the teacher for an hour, then went

⁴¹ Benson, 65.

⁴² Lawrence O. Richards, A Theology of Christian Education, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 13-14.

⁴³ Richards, Theology of Christian, 30.

back out to live without him. Jesus and the disciples lived together; they shared the experiences and traumas of life. They were constantly interacting; constantly initiating and reacting to each other.⁴⁴

Richards continues his attack on the schooling approach to education in the next chapter dealing with body ministry. He argues that Christians need many models of faith, not one as in the schooling approach.

It is important in thinking of Christian education theologically to realize that this portrait of the community points up the need for multiple models of faith's life The "school" model of education, with its single teacher whose concern is with content, is totally inadequate for Christian education. Whatever educational approaches the Christian develops to express the unique educational ministry of nurturing the development of Christ's life, those approaches must reflect the Bible's teaching that the communication of life is a mutual ministry for all.⁴⁵

Next Richards applies his growth model to evangelism. He asserts that people are persuaded and come to Christ by exactly the same means by which they become committed to anything or anyone.

And yet, constantly in Scripture, we find that the supernatural is not in conflict with the natural. Channels of communication which any culture uses to transmit beliefs, values, and understandings of life are just those channels which the Holy Spirit adapts to the communication and nurture of the divine life! There are words. There are living models to give visible expression to abstract concepts. There are interpersonal relationships which encourage (or discourage) internalization. There is acceptance, and the kind of personal transparency that motivates and moves. There is persuasion, explanation, teaching. There is an active doing to learn new skills and ways of living. There is questioning, dialogue, authority and obedience. The Word of God which brings us God's life is processed in human experience in exactly the same

⁴⁴ Richards, Theology of Christian, 31.

⁴⁵ Richards, Theology of Christian, 47.

way that any words about life to be expressed as culture are processed.⁴⁶

In Chapter 6, "a whole-person focus," Richards continues his attack on the traditional schooling method.

We are used to thinking of the personality as composed of more than one's beliefs. We speak of attitudes. Of emotions (affect). Of perception . . . and we can add others. Self-concept, Motives. Faith. And so on. What is interesting is that in our culture we have picked out one element and given it a peculiar priority. That element is belief. Somehow all of our educational efforts seem to hinge on the idea that if we change belief, we change the personality in every respect. We also assume that to change belief we need only to provide new information.

Richards criticizes the idea that we can somehow affect changes in the whole person through strictly cognitive means.⁴⁷

He goes on to say that the church is just adopting a faulty idea which has a long history in our culture.

This is not a new notion. It's a pre-Christian concept, rooted deeply in Western thought. It was expressed many centuries ago by Plato who insisted that if a man only knew the Good, he would surely choose it. Thus "knowing" was given the highest priority, for thought knowing, beliefs, attitudes, values, and behavior were to be reshaped.⁴⁸

In Richards' view, the schooling model should be abandoned by the church not only because of its pre-Christian pedigree, but because it does not work.

We must begin to raise the question of whether we are communicating life . . . or isolated beliefs. We must ask whether or not our acceptance of secular school structures

⁴⁶ Richards, Theology of Christian, 52.

⁴⁷ It will be argued below that Richards makes the same error in reverse. He presumes that cognitive change can be affected through primarily non-cognitive means.

⁴⁸ Richards, Theology of Christian, 60-61.

as the context for the communication of faith may not actually hinder Christian growth. By attempting to teach faith in "school" settings we perhaps have inadvertently given learners the impression that biblical truth is for the mind only, divorced from doing, and that learning God's Word is a separate and distinct intellectual activity for the young!⁴⁹

In Chapter 7, Richards charges that our method of Bible teaching has resulted in distorted faith.

Somehow because what we are attempting to do ("teach the Bible") has validity, we tend to feel that our programs and methods are valid In fact our "school" approach to Bible teaching has all the weaknesses of the first change strategy described in the last chapter. We have attempted to change persons by contact at one point of the personality (the cognitive), and by the simple expedient of providing new (revealed) information. The result far too often has been the development of a distorted faith: a faith that takes the form of beliefs isolated from the total personality.⁵⁰

Finally, Richards concludes that a formal school setting actually inhibits learning, so that if Christians must use something that resembles a class setting, we are better off to pretend that it is not a school!

In summary, what we seem to be discovering is that the formal school setting itself defines certain relationships and certain kinds of sharing (of ideas, not feelings) as appropriate, and thus rules out the kinds of relationships which are significant for discipling! This does not mean that adults or children and adults can not come together to learn. But it does imply that when they do come together, it is best not to define that situation as a "school." As long as teachers and learners perceive themselves to be in school, they will not develop the kinds of relationship or the kinds of sharing which are important for discipling.

Strikingly, it seems that when we adopted from our culture the formal school approach to nurture, we in fact set up the conditions under which discipling and growth in likeness are least likely to take place!⁵¹

⁴⁹ Richards, Theology of Christian, 60-66.

⁵⁰ Richards, Theology of Christian, 70-71.

⁵¹ Richards, Theology of Christian, 114.

There is much to approve of in Richards' approach viewed from the perspective of an evangelical theory of education based on faith as trust. Richards lays out a single unifying principle (life) and follows it to consistent conclusions. He frequently employs Biblical texts, interpreting and applying them in ways generally consistent with twentieth-century evangelical understanding. Although he does not speak directly about the nature of faith, Richards does propose a view of Christian conversion and growth that attempts to avoid the unidimensionality of a purely cognitive schooling approach to Christian education.

However, Richards' approach does contain weaknesses. The primary weakness is that Richards works so hard to avoid the errors of the schooling approach, that his rhetoric degenerates into a tirade against schooling methodology and the cognitive dimensions of faith. While Richards is right that cognitive input alone is unlikely to produce change in the other aspects of one's life, the opposite corollary is equally true. Mere modeling (even multiple modeling) does not guarantee an adequate propositional basis for developing informed passionate trust. The objective of a theory of evangelical education based on faith as trust is not merely to integrate non-believers into the American evangelical subculture. The church needs thoughtful, passionate leaders who will take the church closer to the God who is Truth, than she is now.

The second critique of Richards is that, while he pays much attention to the non-cognitive aspects of human life, his approach seems to have little to say about radical commitment. Even though

Richards shares with Kierkegaard a distrust of cognitive methods to bring about true Christian faith, Richards also seems singularly lacking in passion. One suspects that if Richards' program is successful, he will see a bevy of well-adjusted, happy Christians who fit in well with the current strengths but also weaknesses of American evangelicalism.

The third objection is that there is little room in Richards' system for the supernatural, for miracle. In asserting that much of the evangelization process takes the forms of any other sort of persuasion, Richards is affirming the continuity between ordinary and saving faith. However the same element is missing in Richards that was found lacking in Carnell--the Kierkegaardian notion of the miracle. The process is so normal, so human, in Richards that there seems little need for God Himself to give the condition for saving faith. So while Richards is similar to Kierkegaard in his debunking of mere cognitive indoctrination, he misses one of the most needed elements in an evangelical approach to Christian education; the dimension of passionate commitment.

Mary Ellen Drushal. In her recent book, On Tablets of Human Hearts: Christian Education With Children, Mary Ellen Drushal espouses an approach to Christian education which is centered on student experience. After reproducing a chart from Seymour and Miller which distinguishes five distinct contemporary approaches to Christian education, Drushal identifies her own approach as fitting best under the designations of "Spiritual Development" and "Interpretation."

In examining my own biblical roots, my educational background, and my practical experience, I find that my views fit most naturally in the "Spiritual Development" and "Interpretation" categories. My classroom instruction

focuses on the whole child, on how the child ascribes meaning to experiences, and on how the individual is shaped and guided through the interaction of Scripture with culture and life.⁵²

Similar to Richards', Drushal's philosophy of Christian education focuses on personal growth primarily through the intermediary of experience. Christian educators should "provide quality experiences that help children become confident, competent, and ultimately spiritual adults."⁵³ More completely than Richards, Drushal recognizes the role of passionate commitment, in both the adult leader and, eventually, in the children. "Adults should have a passion for teaching that results in changed lives."⁵⁴ The change toward which teachers should aim is a holistic maturity in Christ. "As Christian teachers our goal, along with Paul the great apostle of the faith, is `We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ' (Col. 1:28)."⁵⁵ For Drushal, maturity involves deep personal commitment and relationship. "Christian education's ultimate hope for children is that they know and love God and serve him with a deep commitment forever."⁵⁶ The

⁵² Mary Ellen Drushal, On Tablets of Human Hearts: Christian Education With Children (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 17. The other three approaches listed by Seymour and Miller (with which Drushal does not identify) are "Religious Instruction," Faith Community," and "Liberation."

⁵³ Drushal, 13.

⁵⁴ Drushal, 19.

⁵⁵ Drushal, 19.

⁵⁶ Drushal, 21.

development of this personal commitment is paramount so that the “focus of each class session should be shaped by this goal.”⁵⁷

As evangelical teachers plan lessons, they should focus on experiences and biblical concepts that lead to deeper commitment. The lesson should:

evolve from a consideration of the child’s developmental stage, the biblical truth being taught, and the opportunities for participation in as many sensory experiences as possible. We can trust God for the work of regeneration in our children’s lives as we endeavor to educate them in meaningful ways.⁵⁸

In addition to the growth metaphor, Drushal invokes the image of a journey. Teachers and students together “are all sojourners involved in this pilgrimage of faith in Christian education.”⁵⁹ Her statement of the goal of evangelical Christian education is not concerned primarily with assent to particular propositions but with beginning and growing in salvation. “The fundamental goal for children is to receive the gift of salvation and to be nurtured and disciplined into faith, trust and growth toward maturity with Christ.”⁶⁰

Drushal, like Richards, would benefit from a more balanced approach based on faith as trust. When the Bible is mentioned, it is as a means to relationship. Deep commitment is not, for Drushal, explicitly resting on knowledge or understanding. While Drushal seems to have captured more fully than Richards the passionate commitment

⁵⁷ Drushal, 21.

⁵⁸ Drushal, 21.

⁵⁹ Drushal, 21.

⁶⁰ Drushal, 21.

sion of faith she, as Richards, lacks the foundation of faith built on a foundation of propositional understanding.

Nicholas P. Wolterstorff. Another aspect of the a-cognitive approach to evangelical Christian education can be found in Nicholas Wolterstorff's, Educating for Responsible Action. Reacting to the idea that the primary purpose of Christian education is to develop in the student a "Christian world view," Wolterstorff sees education as a broader sort of life training.

It used to be said, particularly in the Calvinist tradition, that the goal of Christian education is to impart to the student the Christian "world and life view." The intent behind putting it this way was to affirm that the gospel pertains to all of life and not just to some "religious" part. But this formulation is inadequate, for it puts too much emphasis on a "view," that is, on what we have called cognition. To be identified with the people of God and to share in its work does indeed require that one have a system of belief--call it "the Christian world and life view." But it requires more than that. It requires the Christian way of life. Christian education is education aimed at training for the Christian way of life, not just education aimed at inculcating the Christian world and life view.⁶¹

Wolterstorff is not opposed to the development of a Christian world view in the student, in fact, such a development is a necessary step, a prerequisite to the more important objective which Wolterstorff calls "tendency learning" or "decisional learning." The primary difference between this and the "world and life view" is that tendency learning engages the will and evokes volitional commitment.

The facet or dimension of Christian education presented in this book is that of tendency learning--that is, learning in which the student acquires tendencies to action. This is called decisional learning in some of the

⁶¹ : Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, Educating for Responsible Action (Grand Rapids: ~~Wm. B~~ Eerdmans Publishing ~~Co.~~, 1980), 13-14.

publications of Christian Schools International, where it is described as learning which consists of growth in right choosing, in accepting or refection what is in the light of what ought to be. It includes moral and aesthetic, legal and logical choosing, based on relevant Christian standards. Included in this dimension is growth in appreciation, attitude, judgment, and commitment.⁶²

Wolterstorff argues that "one can have the knowledge and the abilities required for acting responsibly and yet have no tendency to engage in such action."⁶³ Therefore, Wolterstorff advocates the intentional development of a program of Christian education which "will take that further step of cultivating the appropriate tendencies in the child. It will have tendency learning as one of its fundamental goals."⁶⁴ Wolterstorff calls this philosophy of education "a responsibility theory of education."⁶⁵ While Wolterstorff says that that "a person need not be a Christian to hold a responsibility theory of education," he insists that any truly "Christian philosophy of education--and, more specifically, a philosophy of Christian education--will be a responsibility theory."⁶⁶

For Wolterstorff, the litmus test of any theory of education which purports to be Christian is whether or not it results in responsible action on the part of the learner. Performance of certain actions is the lone criteria of a successful educational program. In this context,

⁶² Wolterstorff, vi-vii.

⁶³ Wolterstorff, 14.

⁶⁴ Wolterstorff, 14.

⁶⁵ Wolterstorff, 14.

⁶⁶ Wolterstorff, 15.

knowledge (even of the Bible or Christian doctrine) is means to the end of producing responsible action.

But if responsible action is to ensue, more is necessary than for the students to have knowledge of the relevant matters and the ability to perform the relevant actions. Knowledge and ability are not yet performance. It is also necessary that the students' tendencies, ranging all the way from their unreflective habits to highly self-conscious commitments, be those of acting in accord with the normative laws for right action. Education, accordingly, must have among its goals to secure--always in morally defensible ways--the formation of right tendencies. It must seek to develop in students the habit of speaking their native language correctly. It must seek to develop in students a commitment to the principle of doing what is honest. Education must aim at producing alterations in what students tend (are disposed,⁶⁷ are inclined) to do. It must aim at tendency learning.

While an evangelical theory of Christian education based on faith as trust would undoubtedly result in changes in action, behavior modification is not the sole or even primary objective under which all other goals should be subsumed. Wolterstorff leaves the strong impression that knowledge about God, and even a loving relationship with God are but means to the end of causing children to behave morally. In an educational theory based on faith as trust the primary goal of Christian education is developing an informed passionate trust in God. Obeying God's laws or behaving in a responsible moral fashion comes as a result of trust that what God says about human life and values is true. While it is true that trust and obedience can open a person to knowledge, it is equally true that when a person truly trusts God, she believes that what God has revealed concerning human behavior is also worthy of trust. Wolterstorff's responsibility theory of

⁶⁷ Wolterstorff, 15.

education lack both a strong emphasis on the role of propositional assent and the element of passion in commitment.

While each of the preceding theorists has included some elements which would also be found in a theory of Christian education based on faith as trust, significant concerns keep each from being a fully balanced approach. There are, however, some evangelical educational writers who approximate a more balanced understanding.

Educators Who ^E emphasize both ^C Content and ^E Experience

This section will examine the two evangelical theorists since 1950 who best represent a balance between the cognitive and experiential poles. They serve to illustrate both the best theoretical work that yet has been done and also weaknesses which can be remedied by specific elements of a theory of evangelical Christian education based on faith as trust.

Frank E. Gaebelein. According to Warren Benson, the writings of Frank Gaebelein, and in particular his 1968 volume, The Pattern of God's Truth, have had "a profound effect on many evangelicals."⁶⁸ As Benson also notes, many of those influenced by him (such as Lawrence O. Richards), have been less balanced in their resulting views than Gaebelein.⁶⁹

Harold Burgess is correct in noting that the "heart of religious education, for Gaebelein, is the communication of biblical truths by teachers who are able to lead students to an understanding of these

⁶⁸ Benson, 57.

⁶⁹ Benson, 57.

truths."⁷⁰ Preaching and teaching the Bible are high priorities for Gaebelein. "He places a high priority on the verbal teaching of the scriptures and upon the pulpit as a functional center of Christian religious education."⁷¹ Gaebelein is critical of evangelicals (and others) who do not integrate the Bible (both in content and methodology) into their philosophy of Christian education.

The plain fact that the same weakness afflicts most Protestant attempts at educational philosophy that mars Roman Catholic educational philosophy--a neglect of full reliance upon Scripture. And, let it be noted, this is true even of the theologically conservative groups; in doctrine they are thoroughly Biblical, but they have failed to see that the great truths of Scripture embrace even the so-called secular fields of knowledge. Despite their adherence to fundamental gospel truth, they have either not seen the unity of all truth in God or, recognizing this unity, have done little to make it a living reality throughout the whole of education. Thus much of evangelical educational thought has yet to move beyond a kind of scholastic schizophrenia in which a highly orthodox theology coexists uneasily with a teaching of non-religious subjects that differs little from that in secular institutions.⁷²

In 1964 Gaebelein wrote (perhaps overly optimistically) that "the climate is favorable for the construction of a view of education that, instead of being a patchwork of naturalistic ideas mixed with Biblical truth, will stand under the truth of the Word of God itself."⁷³

For Gaebelein, faith and reason are not in conflict, but partners.

⁷⁰ Burgess, 27.

⁷¹ Burgess, 27.

⁷² Gaebelein, "Toward a Philosophy," 40-41. Gaebelein insists that the Bible is "the very heart of the curriculum. For, as we have already seen, the road to the integration of every subject with the truth of God must take as its starting point the Word of God. Now to teach the Bible as one among many subjects, even to require it of all students is not enough." (pp. 46-47).

⁷³ Gaebelein, "Toward a Philosophy," 41.

Now if truth "happens" by way of revelation, then faith has its vital function in knowing the truth. Augustine put the relation of faith to knowledge thus: "Nisi crederesti, non intellegisti" ("Unless you believe, you will not come to know"). Anselm of Canterbury set down the same epistemological principle even more succinctly in these three words, "Credo ut intelligam" (I believe that I might know").⁷⁴

But Gaebelien is quick to caution his readers lest any confuse his view of faith and reason with mysticism. Gaebelien asserts that "it should be plainly understood that nothing that has been said here of faith has been meant to decry the place of reason in apprehending truth."⁷⁵ He affirms that the rational side of epistemology is "an essential, although not the sole, element in knowing."⁷⁶ His citation of Anselm should not be confused with fideism. "Credo ut intelligam" does not for a moment do away with the patient exercise of the mind in the ordinary discipline of learning."⁷⁷

Gaebelien, however, is not just concerned with cognitive knowledge. Rather his understanding of knowledge embraces a wide range of educational objectives.

Our concern is with education. And education, however elusive its precise definition, is concerned with knowledge--not just knowledge in the narrow sense of learning formal subject matter but knowledge in the broad sense of the development of skills, the cultivation of emotional, aesthetic, and spiritual responses, and the widening and deepening of general interests. As for Christianity, it too has to do with knowledge, the higher knowledge that

⁷⁴ Gaebelien, "Toward a Philosophy," 44.

⁷⁵ Gaebelien, "Toward a Philosophy," 44-6) +5

⁷⁶ Gaebelien, "Toward a Philosophy," 44.

⁷⁷ Gaebelien, "Toward a Philosophy," 45.

leads to life more abundant here and now as well as in the future.⁷⁸

Like Richards who followed and was likely influenced by Gaebelein, he identifies education with all of life.

What is education? There are as many answers to the question as there are differing views of learning. But most, if not all of them, have one thing in common; they see education as related to life. Intellectual dullness and spiritual deadness are its antipodes. Teaching that is not alive is nothing but empty words and futile effort. The instinct to relate education to life that runs through so much of modern thinking about education is sound. Indeed, we might do far worse than define education as life and life as education, and let it go at that. Any training that enriches the capacity of human beings for living in accord with God's will is well worthy of the name education. To the extent that a philosophy of education has depth as well as breadth, it will recognize this principle.⁷⁹

So while maintaining an emphasis on cognitive learning in general, and the centrality of the teachings of the Bible in particular, Gaebelein endorses a much broader view of education which includes skills and emotions, as well as spiritual and aesthetic development.

When Gaebelein turns to the subject of saving faith, he develops a view which sees faith as trusting Christ with all a person has and is (physical, mental, spiritual, etc.).

The knowledge whereby a human being knows God and Jesus Christ unto life eternal is that of the whole man. It is knowledge gained by commitment of the whole person, body, mind and spirit, to God in Christ. Belief, saving faith, goes far beyond assent to some theological formula; it is a matter of the individual's trust⁸⁰ with the unified totality of his powers, in the Son of God.

⁷⁸ Frank E. Gabelein, Christian Education in Democracy: The Report of the N. A. E. Committee (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 24.

⁷⁹ Gaebelein, Christian Education, 34-35.

⁸⁰ Gaebelein, Christian Education, 36. Gaebelein amplifies: "To be a Christian is nothing less than to be 'in Christ' through personal rebirth into

Gaebelein sees the objective of bringing individuals into a whole life relationship with God as the ultimate purpose of Christian education.

Eternal life is more than duration; its special quality depends upon knowledge of God's Son through surrender of the entire person to Him. For the first prerequisite for eternal life is that one should be in a position to enjoy it. And only surrender to Christ places one in this position. Such, in Scriptural principle, is the final goal of Christian education.⁸¹

Here in Gaebelein we find in seminal form several of the key elements of a more rounded theory of evangelical Christian education. While maintaining the centrality of the Bible as the prime source for both content and methods, Gaebelein sees the educational enterprise as a ministry to the whole person, just as he sees saving faith as a whole-life commitment not divorced from rational understanding.

Although Gaebelein is much closer to including the prime elements of an evangelical theory of education based on faith as trust, there are still constructive adjustments which can be made. Gaebelein indicates that he sees a connection between faith and reason, but this is not developed in any detail. How exactly can he endorse "Credo ut intelligam" and still see reason as being of equal importance with faith? Although Gaebelein implies that he views everyday faith, faith in revelation, and faith in Christ as related, this is never clearly stated. To Gaebelein's philosophy could be added a clearer understanding of the continuity between ordinary faith and saving faith. His understand-

the family of the redeemed through faith in the finished work of the Saviour. It is not following Christ that makes Christians, but a transforming relationship through personal surrender to Him." (p. 25).

⁸¹ Gaebelein, Christian Education, 36.

ing of the role of faith in salvation could also be sharpened by a Kierkegaard-like conception of the necessary miracle in God giving the occasion for faith in Christ.

Jim Wilhoit. The current evangelical Christian educational theorist whose views most closely approximate a theory of education based on faith as trust is Wheaton College professor, Jim Wilhoit. Like Gaebelin, Wilhoit sees a central and indispensable role for the Bible and theology.

Theology is crucial to Christian education. Often Christian education has been accused of drifting far from orthodox theological teaching, particularly in regard to the Christian view of human nature and spiritual growth. This drifting is unfortunate, for Christian education is lost unless grounded in biblically based teaching. No matter how much zeal a Christian educator may have, it is of little use without an awareness⁸² of the essential theological underpinning of the faith.

Wilhoit is even more direct than Gaebelin in his defense of the role of cognitive learning in Christian education. Wilhoit says that he must address this issue "because so many religious educators have chosen to emphasize feelings almost to the exclusion of cognitive knowledge."⁸³ He observes that among both liberal and conservative educators, there is a "pervasive sense" that "we must be far more concerned about feelings than about knowledge."⁸⁴ Wilhoit sees this as a reaction against the need for cognitive understanding. "In

⁸² Jim Wilhoit, Christian Education and the Search for Meaning (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 59-60.

⁸³ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 32.

⁸⁴ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 32.

actuality, many Christian educators are not so much feeling-oriented as they are noncognitive or anticognitive in their approach."⁸⁵

Wilhoit cites the example of a nationally distributed teaching guide which purports to be a lesson designed to promote greater understanding of Psalm 95:1-7. First the students are asked to "relate some of the ideas they used to have about God."⁸⁶ Then, after reading the seven verses in Psalms, the lesson continues with a "Focus on hands. Have each person look at his/her own hands, then respond spontaneously" to questions such as "What would it be like to be without hands?" or "Look through magazines to find pictures of hands expressing feeling and actions of hands."⁸⁷ Next the students hold hands in a circle and sing, "He's got the whole world in his hands." Wilhoit comments,

Lest there be any doubt what the curriculum writer is after, he adds, "With the group in a circle holding hands or possibly putting hands and arms around each other's shoulders or waists, the feeling of closeness is communicated. Our hands bring us closer to each other."⁸⁸

For Wilhoit, this sort of approach may encourage temporary pleasant feelings but does little or nothing to enhance our understanding of the Bible (in this case, Psalms).

Wilhoit asserts that many examples of "similarly noncognitive Christian-education materials could be found from virtually any

⁸⁵ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 32.

⁸⁶ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 33.

⁸⁷ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 33.

⁸⁸ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 33.

theological orientation."⁸⁹ These curricula concern Wilhoit not because they "aim to be holistic or to include feeling, or affective, dimension in the teaching process." What concerns him is that due to "their anticognitive stance; they almost glorify the nonrational element."⁹⁰ Instead of such curricula leading students into a deep experience with God or the scriptures, Wilhoit observes that many "find education that is oriented around feelings to be trite and cute, and far from providing the deep and moving experience its well-intended designers desire."⁹¹ Wilhoit believes that many Christian educators are caught in a false dichotomy between content and feeling.

Experientially oriented educators mistakenly assert that our depth of feeling about something increases as our understanding decreases. They are wrong. Beauty, mystery, appreciation, attraction, and awe are usually built on a thoughtful understanding. Head knowledge and heart knowledge are not contradictory alternatives. In fact, neither of them in isolation represents the biblical conception of religious knowledge.⁹²

Although Wilhoit gives a strong endorsement of the role of cognitive learning in Christian education, it would be a grave misunderstanding to classify him in the camp with Zuck and Mee. To understand where Wilhoit strikes the balance between content and experience it is necessary to explore in some detail his concept of knowledge. Wilhoit thinks that much of the division in Christian

⁸⁹ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 33.

⁹⁰ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 33-4. 34

⁹¹ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 34.

⁹² Wilhoit, Christian Education, 34.

education has its source in differing understandings of the nature of knowledge of God and how Christian educators can help persons come to such knowledge.

It has long been agreed that Christian education should play a role in helping persons come to know God. Unfortunately, educators often disagree as to what it means to promote the knowledge of God. Many of the divisions in Christian education can be traced to this watershed issue.⁹³

Wilhoit says that his own answer to the question "is rooted in the Hebraic conception of knowledge of God and in the New Testament emphasis on the redemptive work of Christ."⁹⁴ This knowledge is not "an abstract knowledge learned solely from books and other people, but the knowledge born of a mature relationship."⁹⁵ The Hebraic understanding of the knowledge of God is transpersonal. "The closest parallel we experience to true knowledge of God is the knowledge of another person which grows out of a friendship."⁹⁶

For the Hebrews, knowledge of God meant, "recognition of, and obedience to, one who acted purposefully in the world" (Blackman 1950, p. 121). To know something meant to have experienced it or observed it in such a way that it made an impact on one's life. Thus the statement that Christ "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21, RSV) does not mean that he had no intellectual comprehension of sin. But rather that he had never personally experienced sin. The Hebraic notion that knowledge entails a personal relationship or involvement can be seen in the biblical use of "know" to describe sexual relations: "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain" (Gen. 4:1,

⁹³ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 29.

⁹⁴ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 29.

⁹⁵ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 29.

⁹⁶ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 29.

RSV). Something is known when it becomes a part of one, not simply when it can be defined or recognized.⁹⁷

But this Hebrew conception, grounded as it is in experience and interpersonal relationship, does not exclude an important role for cognitive understanding.

Knowledge of God or communication with him is dependent both on our grasping content (the Bible and theology) and on our experiencing a vital relationship with him. Without a reconciled relationship to God which is based on the work of Christ, true knowledge of God is impossible. And conversely, just as a relationship in which lovers or friends never exchange information about themselves is doomed, so too our relationship with God cannot develop merely on feelings of reconciliation. A growing friendship requires an objective understanding of what the other person is like (content).⁹⁸

So for Wilhoit, cognitive knowledge is an indispensable element in the relational knowledge of another human and in a growing relational knowledge of God. In Wilhoit's view, "God desires a deep, loving friendship with each of us--a friendship in which each party comes to know and understand the other."⁹⁹ But Wilhoit insists that such a relationship entails more than just emotion. "A marriage, a courtship, or a deep friendship cannot exist just on feelings. Coming to know the other person requires shared experiences, commitment, and communication."¹⁰⁰ Just knowing about God or just having an emotional encounter with God, neither alone forms a deep relationship.

Factual knowledge and feeling-based knowledge must be coupled with an experiential knowledge of God. Persons

⁹⁷ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 34-35.

⁹⁸ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 30.

⁹⁹ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 29.

¹⁰⁰ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 29-30.

can know God only if they have walked with him, worshiped [sic] him, prayed to him--in other words, lived as if his existence mattered. This is not to diminish the value of the Bible in the process of coming to know God, for the Bible is a necessary and irreplaceable source of information about God. Knowledge of the Bible, however, must always be seen as a means to an end, namely, knowledge of God,¹⁰¹ which can come only through the work of Jesus Christ.

Wilhoit applies this dual emphasis on content and experience to his own "transformational" approach to Christian education. After reviewing a number of secular educators, whom he categorizes as "romantics," "transmissionists" and "developmentalists," Wilhoit concludes that none of their approaches are adequate to the unique task of Christian education.

The difficult job of equipping believers to carry out the responsibilities of their priesthood cannot be accomplished through simply Christianizing one of the secular theories of education we have discussed.¹⁰²

Wilhoit then proposes a theory that incorporates elements of the three secular approaches and goes beyond them. "One such alternative approach can be called the transformational approach, because it seeks to foster a radical change in learner-disciples by remaking them from the inside out."¹⁰³ This approach is distinguished from that of the romantics and the transmissionists because the transformational approach begins the change process in the interior life of the individual. "By contrast, romantics assume the inside is fine as it is and seek to peel away the layers of the outside that hide the true inner self.

¹⁰¹ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 35.

¹⁰² Wilhoit, Christian Education, 90.

¹⁰³ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 90-91.

Transmissionists believe that persons are changed from the outside in." The closest tie is with developmentalists because they "place a similar emphasis on change from within, but they tend to see it as a relatively simple process of adjusting one's perspective and acquiring new categories."¹⁰⁴

Similarly to Drushal, Wilhoit invokes the image of a journey to explain his transformational approach.

In the transformational model of Christian education, the student is seen as a pilgrim on a journey, and the teacher as a helpful and supportive guide and fellow wayfarer. The pilgrim ultimately is responsible for his or her journey, but the teacher provides guidance and support. One of the chief tasks of the teacher-guide is to help pilgrims construct an appropriate map of the land they are crossing. The quality of their journey and its ultimate outcome will largely depend on the mental map the pilgrims carry in their heads.¹⁰⁵

Again within the pilgrim metaphor, Wilhoit delineates an integral role for cognitive learning. Students build their mental map largely from the information gained from their guide (teacher).

Wilhoit then lists three principles which he views as central to a transformational model of Christian education. Each of these three develop an aspect of the a-cognitive side of his approach. The first principle is that it is God's grace which ultimately transforms, the second is a context of strong relationships, and the third is the value of "mystery, wonder, awe, reverence, and beauty."¹⁰⁶ While each of these contributes to his overall theory, the first is especially important

¹⁰⁴ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 91.

¹⁰⁵ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 91-92.

¹⁰⁶ Wilhoit, Christian Education, 94.

in relation to a theory based on faith as trust. Wilhoit elaborates his understanding of the role of God in the transformation process.

Transformation occurs as we open ourselves to the working of God's grace in our lives. In this process we are at once active, making ourselves available for God to work, and completely passive, because it is God, not ourselves, who transforms us into his image. This situation is like that of a man who goes to an ophthalmologist to have his failing vision treated. The patient is utterly incapable of correcting his eye problems himself, but he can visit a physician. The eye doctor treats the patient, and through diligent compliance with the treatment regimen, the patient's vision is restored. The patient is active in making himself available for the physician's work and in diligently following the treatment prescribed. He is passive in allowing both the physician to make a diagnosis and the medication to be effective.¹⁰⁷

This is the closest Wilhoit comes to any concept of God being the one who gives the occasion (miracle) for the human response of faith in salvation. While Wilhoit does include a critical role for God's action in human change which was not clearly present in Richards or Gaebelein, his understanding of the role of God in the transformation process could be significantly enhanced by the addition of a Kierkegaard-like understanding of the Holy Spirit miraculously providing both the knowledge of sin and the experiential encounter with Christ.

While Wilhoit does include many of the facets which distinguish a theory based on faith as trust, his transformational model could still be enhanced by the other two adjustments made to Carnell's understanding of faith. A Locke-like understanding of the truth of Christianity and the Bible resting on historical evidence for Christ's miracles would give added strength to Wilhoit's insistence that theology is crucial to

¹⁰⁷ Jim Wilhoit, Christian Education, 92.

Christian education. While Wilhoit moves some distance toward describing the continuity between human trust in relationship and the Christian's trust in God, this could also be enhanced by the understanding of faith as trust articulated in chapter 5. Although Wilhoit does see cognitive knowledge as an indispensable element of relational knowledge, he does not carry this insight into a clear conception of the relation between faith in propositions, humans and God.

This section has examined two more balanced evangelical Christian education theorists. While these come closer to exemplifying elements of a Christian educational theory based on faith as trust, they both could be significantly enhanced by elements present in the adjusted theory in Chapter 5.

Current Evangelical Sunday School Curricula

This section will examine excerpts from two Sunday school curricula which are popular with evangelical churches. There are currently six publishers of Sunday school curricula which dominate the evangelical church market: David C. Cook Publishing, Gospel Light, Group Publishing, Scripture Press, Standard Publishing, and Union Gospel Press.¹⁰⁸ Each of these share, to a greater or lesser degree, some of the weaknesses which will be identified below. None has achieved the balance of content and personal experience advocated in this dissertation. The two examples of current popular curricula analyzed below

¹⁰⁸ Douglas Hargis, interview with author, 13 April 1995. Hargis is the Church Supplies Manager for Berean Christian Stores in Colton, California. He is a graduate of Bethel Seminary who served as a youth pastor for seven years and during the past ten years has worked with Sunday school curriculum in three different Berean stores in California (Bakersfield, Riverside and Colton).

were chosen because they reflect extremes of the imbalances or weaknesses to be found in all the most widely used evangelical curricula.

Union Gospel. The first curriculum to be examined is from Union Gospel Press which is oriented primarily toward transmission of cognitive biblical knowledge. This curriculum consists of three publications, which presumably are to be used in conjunction: the student booklet, a teacher's guide, and a background resource book for teachers and administrators. Each lesson in the primary classes consists of four parts: a brief introduction to interest students in the content, the content lesson, a short exhortation, applicational activities, and an explanation of the central or "golden" Bible text. Following is a reproduction of the first of the two pages for April 16, 1995 (the Easter lesson) in the student primary level booklet.

Jesus Lives! (Easter)

LESSON: Luke 24:1-11;
1 Corinthians 15:12-17, 56-58

GOLDEN TEXT--"Your labor
is not in vain in the Lord"
(1 Corinthians 15:58).

OUR LESSON TALK

Early on Sunday some women walked to Jesus' tomb. They had spices to put on His body. The stone was not in front of the door. Jesus' body was gone! Two angels, whose clothes shined brightly, said, "Jesus is not dead! He lives! He told you He would rise again."

The women remembered. They ran to the disciples. "Jesus lives!" they said. Mary and her friends were so excited. The disciples did not believe them.

Some Christians in Corinth did not think they would live

If there is no resurrection and Jesus is still dead, our sins are still in us. Sin brings death, but Jesus died for us and lives again. Thank God Jesus is alive, and we will live! We should work hard for Jesus. We will live forever. He will reward our work.¹⁰⁹

The focus is almost entirely on cognitive content. Only in the final paragraph is there anything that resembles an affective appeal, the dual exhortations, "We should work hard for Jesus" and "He will reward our work." The only other material put in the students hands that day is the second page, a series of learning puzzles:

Draw a line from the beginning of each sentence to its proper ending.

The disciples did not believe the women.

Two men whose clothes shone brightly said, "Jesus lives!"

The women ran _____ work hard for Jesus.

We should _____ to the disciples.

Use the code to write the verse.

A B D E H I L N O R S T U V Y
! @ # \$ % & * - = , ? : ; [

[- : = & ! @ - : = c ,

$$* - ? \quad c^* \quad ; ! c^* \quad c^*$$

? % \$ & - = # " (1 Corinthians 15:58).

¹⁰⁹ Donna Poole, Primary Bible Learner; Spring Quarter (Cleveland: Union Gospel Press, 1995), 18.

Cross out every P, Q, Z, and Y. Print the other letters on the lines below.

P E Q A Z S Y T P E Q R Z M Y E Y A
P N Q S Z T Y H P A Q T Z J Y E P
S Q Y Z U Y S P L Q I Z V Y E P S

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Even the activities page is focused exclusively on the primary students reproducing elements of the cognitive material presented in lecture by the teacher.

In the accompanying teacher's guide, primary teachers are given the following script to be read (or memorized and recited) to the students:

TELLING THE LESSON

(Use flannelgraph figures.) On the first Easter Sunday Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and some other women were headed for Jesus' tomb before dawn (Luke 24:10). As was the custom of the day, they were taking spices to put on the body of Jesus. The women had wondered, "Who will roll away that heavy stone for us?" (cf. Mark 16:3). Imagine their surprise when they saw the stone was rolled away. Their shock was even greater when they entered the tomb--Jesus' body had vanished! The women were confused. Where was Jesus?

Suddenly two angels, whose clothing shined brightly, stood next to the women. The women fell to the ground in fear. "Why are you looking for Jesus here?" the angels asked. "He is alive!"

The angels reminded the women, who were from Galilee, that Jesus had told them that He would be crucified, rise again on the third day, and meet them in Galilee. Suddenly they remembered that Jesus had said just that. The women hurried to the disciples to tell them that Jesus lives. The women were so excited about their news, but the disciples did not believe them. Later, they believed and

¹¹⁰ Poole, Primary Bible Learner, 19.

preached, "Jesus lives!" (Put tulip on wall scene.)

Some of the Corinthian Christians did not believe in the resurrection of the body. If they believed that Jesus arose, Paul wondered, how could they think we will not? If we are not going to rise, Christ would not have risen either.

What would it mean if Jesus had not risen? It would make preaching just empty words. Our faith in Jesus would be an empty hope--of no use. Paul and the many others who have preached and even died for Jesus would be nothing but liars. Paul said that to deny our resurrection is to deny Christ's.

If Jesus did not rise we would still have to pay for our own sins. We would still be under the power of our sin and with no hope for change. How awful it would be if Jesus had not died for sin or risen!

When we sin, we break God's law. The Bible says that sin pays wages--death (Rom. 6:23). Jesus set us free from sin and death. He paid for our sin on the cross and He rose from the dead! Thank God that He gives us victory over sin's power in our lives! As Jesus controls our lives, we experience His resurrection power. (Read Philipians 3:10.) He lives in us and works through us.

Let nothing keep you from believing in Jesus' resurrection and in your own. Your body will rise from the grave. If you have trusted Jesus as Savior, you will go to heaven. There Jesus will reward you for all the work you did for Him on earth! We should use all our energy to serve Him.

Again in this section the teacher is given a few exhortative comments at the end of the lesson and one of the exhortations is directed toward cognitive belief, "Let nothing keep you from believing in Jesus' resurrection and in your own."

Turning to the resource book does not yield suggestions for application or reaching other affective objectives. Instead (in a section ironically titled, "The Heart of the Lesson," the teacher or administrator is treated to additional explanation of the biblical text:

Heart of the Lesson

¹¹¹ Poole, Primary Bible Teacher: Spring Quarter (Cleveland,: Union Gospel Press, 1995), 28-29.

Upon receiving the report of the women, the Eleven did not believe (Luke 24:11). When the risen Christ appeared to His disciples, they thought they had seen a spirit until He revealed Himself (vss. 36-40). In Galilee some days later, some still had doubts (Matt. 28:17).

During the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, however, the God-Man clearly proved His prophecy (Matt. 16:21; Acts 1:3). Christ had risen! We therefore have every reason to believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ. As believers we also have the solemn responsibility to share the facts and implications of that miracle.

1. The fact of the resurrection (Luke 24:1-3). Luke, who authored his gospel around A.D. 60, believed so completely in the resurrection that he simply made several clear and detailed statements concerning God's action.

Have you realized that if the last chapter of Luke had not been written, all the foregoing chapters would have their genuineness and authenticity negated?

2. The messengers of the resurrection (Luke 24:4-7). God's heralds appeared to the group of women in the form of men. The women were perplexed and confused by what they witnessed. The messengers threw light on the situation by asking the crucial question: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

The question was not a rebuke. Rather, it was intended to be a revelation to them of the status of the One whom they had come to anoint. They had seen Him die; now He was alive!

3. The reactions to the resurrection (Luke 24:8-11; 1 Cor. 15:12). With their memories stimulated to recall Christ's very words concerning the events of His passion (Luke 24:8), the women returned to report the marvelous news to the Eleven and to others.

The disbelief on the part of the apostles was due to a poor memory of what Jesus had clearly said and a lack of faith and expectation that God could work such a miracle.

4. The doctrinal implications of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:13-17, 56). The text makes it abundantly clear that the resurrection was not merely for the purpose of manifestation divine power. Belief in the resurrection is the only sensible position to take. Without the reality of the bodily resurrection of Christ, there would be no future resurrection of believers and no hope.

To deny the resurrection of the dead, as some apparently did, is to deny Christ's resurrection. Paul argued that the absence of Christ's resurrection would lead too incapable conclusions: gospel preaching would be vain and become mere pretense; Paul and his coworkers would be

liars; and worst of all, the problem of sin, which has plagued mankind since the Fall, would not yet be solved (1 Cor. 15:14-17).

First Corinthians 15:56 reveals that the law was given to convince men of sin. Sin, in turn, brings death. Death, in this case, means spiritual death, or eternal separation from God.¹¹²

While there are interesting (at least for some adults) background information and suggestion for an evangelical interpretation of the text, there are no suggestions for further activities of any sort. This is almost wholly cognitive curricula with little value being placed on emotions or experience. And the adult versions of the student and teacher booklets are equally cognitive in orientation.¹¹³

It is clear that these Union Gospel Press curricula, like all evangelical curricula, do include the idea of a personal relationship with Christ. The method is to accomplish this (and any other) goal primarily through the means of cognitive propositional comprehension and adherence. This betrays, in this writer's view, an underlying understanding that saving faith is primarily a matter of accepting as true certain biblical, doctrinal propositions (even for the primary age group).

Group Publishing. Near the opposite end of the evangelical curricular spectrum is the Hand's-On Bible Curriculum published by Group Publishing of Loveland, Colorado. A very different approach can be perceived from the opening paragraphs of the Teacher's Guide

There's nothing more exciting than helping kids develop a relationship with Jesus Christ. But keeping fifth- and

¹¹² Beryl C. Bidlen, ed., Bible Expositor and Illuminator: Spring Quarter (Cleveland: Union Gospel Press, 1995), 98. ✓

¹¹³ Beryl C. Bidlen, ed., Adult Bible Class: Spring Quarter (Cleveland: Union Gospel Press, 1995) and Beryl C. Bidlen, ed., Adult Bible Teacher: Spring Quarter (Cleveland: Union Gospel Press, 1995).

↑ Not in Bib.

sixth-graders interested in Bible study and Christian growth can be a challenge. Many kids drop out at this age, complaining that Bible lessons are boring--just more of the same old thing. Teachers tell us they're desperate for something that works.

We've found a way to get kids excited about studying the Bible. Each quarter of Hands-On Bible Curriculum™ is packed with fresh, creative, active programming that will capture kids' interest and keep them coming back for more.¹¹⁴

The leaders guide continues describing the accompanying package of materials called the "Learning Lab."

Your students will be fascinated with the neat gadgets and gizmos packed in the Learning Lab. And you'll feel good about seeing kids grow spiritually while they're having fun. To build excitement, keep the contents of the Learning Lab under cover. Kids will keep wondering what strange and wonderful gizmos you'll pull out for next week's lesson.¹¹⁵

Then the prospective teacher is told the advantages to her or him of this approach.

What does active learning mean to you as a teacher? It takes a lot of pressure off because the spotlight shifts from you to the students. Instead of being the principal player, you become a guide and facilitator--a choreographer of sorts!¹¹⁶

The early pages of the leader's guide also include tips on dealing with the students in the classroom.

Get to know your students. When you meet your class members for the first time, get to know them by name. Ask a fun question such as "If you were an animal, what would you be and why?" to help kids get to know each

¹¹⁴ Paul Woods, et al., Hands on Bible Curriculum: Teachers Guide Grades 5 and 6, Spring (Loveland, Colo.: Group, 1995), 4. This is the oldest grade currently published by Group. It was chosen because of the probability that the curriculum for older children would include more cognitive content than those for the younger grades.

¹¹⁵ Woods, et al., Hands On, 4-5.

¹¹⁶ Woods, et al., Hands On, 5.

other better.

And when new students show up from week to week, welcome them to the class and help them feel at home. Your sincere interest in each class member will greatly enhance the experiences you'll share in the next 13 weeks.¹¹⁷

The final overall teacher instruction makes the first reference to God since the opening paragraph four pages earlier.

Rely on the Holy Spirit to help you. Don't be afraid of kids' questions. Remember the best answers are those the kids find themselves--not the ones teachers spoon-feed them.¹¹⁸

Turning to the individual lessons, each is filled with student participation activities, many with no clear connection to any scripture passage. For example, in a lesson called, "Accepting Responsibility" presumably based on Luke 19:11-27, the following is a typical instruction for the teacher.

Select a "designated inflater" to be responsible for blowing up the beach ball from the Learning Lab during this activity.

Form a circle. Have the designated inflater (or DI for short) name one responsibility he or she has, such as taking out the trash, cleaning his or her room, or mowing the lawn. Then have the DI blow one breath into the beach ball and reseal it.

Next, have the DI toss the ball to any other person in the circle. This person must also name a responsibility and return the ball to the DI, who adds another breath to the ball. Repeat the process so all students have a chance to catch the ball and name a responsibility. Continue play until the ball is slightly overinflated.

Retrieve the beach ball for use in later lessons. Ask: **What was difficult about this activity?** (Catching the underinflated ball; catching the overinflated ball; thinking up new responsibilities.)

How is blowing up this beach ball like gaining responsibilities in life? (Too little responsibility makes life flat; too much responsibility can make you feel like exploding.)

¹¹⁷ Woods, et al., Hands On, 6.

¹¹⁸ Woods, et al., Hands On, 8.

What surprised you about some of the responsibilities others in your group have? (Nothing; I thought their responsibilities were pretty tough.

Say: **At times it may seem difficult to fulfill all our obligations. But, don't worry too much, God can help us accept responsibility in life and succeed at it as well. Let's learn more about what that means.**¹¹⁹

In a later session entitled "Leadership Training" (the Bible reference is 1 Timothy 4:7-16), the following section follows the heading, "Bible Exploration and Application."

FOLLOW WHICH LEADER?

Make a photocopy of the "Leadership Styles" handout (p. 127) and cut apart the sections. Choose three volunteers to be leaders. Everyone else is a follower. Give each of the leaders one of the sections from the handout.

Say: **The leaders' job is to use their styles of leadership to persuade the followers to follow them. The followers have two minutes to choose which leader they want to follow.**

On "go," have the leaders each start leading using their section of the handout. After two minutes or after all the followers have chosen a leader, call time by shaking the candy-filled cone from the Learning Lab. Ask:

Followers, what caused you to choose one leader over another? (What she was doing looked like the most fun; he looked like he would be easy to follow.)

Leaders, how did you feel about the leadership style you were given? (I felt a little embarrassed bullying people; it was easy; it was fun.

Then ask:

Who are some leaders you follow in real life? (One of my friends is kind of a leader because we usually do what he wants to do; I follow leaders who are nice and doing things I want to do.)

What makes you reject a leader in real life? (I won't follow people if I don't understand or agree with what they're doing; I don't like following bullies or know-it-alls.)

What do you like about the leaders you follow? (They're great people; they know how to have fun; they know what they're doing; they explain things well; they help me.)

Have kids form pairs and read 1 Timothy 4:7-16 together. Then have partners discuss the following questions:

¹¹⁹ Woods, et al., Hands On, 100. This curriculum does not have a student booklet.

Why do you think it's important to lead by example?
(If I live what I say, people will trust me; it's dumb to try to lead if I can't live up to what I tell other People.)

Who are some leaders you follow who lead by example? (My science teacher always demonstrates for the class; the pastor does exactly what he wants us to do; most leaders don't know what they're doing.)

Say: **God wants us to lead by example because it's the best way for followers to learn. Let's learn more about what it feels like to be someone who leads by example.**¹²⁰

This section is followed by singing "Do Lord" with a student volunteer leading the singing. Then the students have an obstacle course activity followed by a brief group debrief on the experience. Discussing the 1 Timothy passage in pairs is the only exposure to the Bible in the entire lesson. This sort of balance is typical of all the lessons in this Teacher's Guide.

In contrast to the Union Gospel Press curricula, the Group Publishing curricula emphasizes vital experience with only minor attention given to cognitive belief. As in any evangelical curricula, the Bible is quoted on occasion, but the overwhelming emphasis is on student participation and experience. Again, no claim is being made that Locke would endorse the Union Gospel materials nor that Kierkegaard would approve the Hand's-On curriculum. What distinguishes these as helpful examples is what each lacks: the Union Gospel materials lack any direct emphasis on involving students in a personal relationship that would lead to passionate commitment and the Hand's-On lessons de-emphasize the role of cognitive understanding and acceptance.

¹²⁰ Woods, et al., Hands On, 122-23.

These two curricula were chosen because they represent extremes. However it is not insignificant that both are selling very well to evangelical churches. As Benson notes,

Evangelical independent publishing houses must read their market carefully. If they are to show a profit, they must produce materials for which there is sufficient demand. Their continuance is based on that reality. Therefore, at times they are hesitant to publish certain materials which are needed but for which the people have little perceived interest.¹²¹

Presumably the financial success of both these curricula indicates that there are church Sunday school programs led by evangelicals who (in significant numbers on both sides) desire these sorts of highly cognitive or highly experiential curricula. In both cases, an understanding of a middle view of faith as trust would bring a balance of biblical content and vital age-appropriate Christian experience.

A New International School Curriculum

This section will further explore how an understanding of faith as trust can be used to constructively critique Christian educational curricula. This will be accomplished through an examination of a new curriculum which has been chosen because it reflects more completely than any current commercial evangelical Sunday school curriculum the distinctives of faith as trust. The curriculum to be considered was not designed for American Sunday schools although in the future it may be used in this venue. The title of the curriculum is Christian Ethics and Morality: A Foundation for Society and it is produced by the Interna-

¹²¹ Benson, "Evangelical Philosophies," 68.

tional School Project.¹²² Since this curriculum is unusual, it may be helpful to explain its origin and purpose.

History of the Curriculum. The curriculum, Christian Ethics and Morality is now in its third, and significantly enlarged, edition. The first edition was written in 1991 by a team of U.S., Canadian and Russian scholars at the request of the Russian Ministry of Education.¹²³ At that time, as now, there was great concern on the part of the Yeltsin government that the decline of centralized power, the weakening of the KGB, and the resulting loss of fear and loyalty to the government would mean a disintegration of morality, especially among Russian youth. A team of Western Christians and Russian advisors was assembled to develop a curriculum to be translated into Russian and taught in conjunction with the showing of a Russian dubbed version of the British film, Jesus.¹²⁴ The present writer had the privilege to travel to Russia and introduce the secondary curriculum at a series of three-day convocations held in the cities of Moscow, Vologda and Leningrad during May of 1991. Approximately 1,000

¹²² The International School Project is a ministry of the JESUS Film Project and Campus Crusade for Christ International.

¹²³ Russia was then still a Republic of the Soviet Union.

¹²⁴ The present writer was recruited to be a part of the initial planning and writing group. From January 1991 to the present, he has served with four others as members of the Curriculum Development and Writing Team. His specific roles have been theological direction and final content editing of the secondary version of the curriculum which is aimed at ninth grade students. There is also an elementary edition of the curriculum aimed at third grade students. The present writer has not worked on that version and it will not be analyzed in this dissertation.

public school elementary and secondary teachers and administrators attended these initial convocations.

From May 1991 until March 1995, 86 teacher convocations were held in eight countries.¹²⁵ More than 26,000 public educators have attended these conferences during the past four years.¹²⁶ During this time the secondary curriculum has been expanded from an initial 10 sessions, to 13 sessions in 1993, to a total of 35 as of October 1994.

Overview of the Curriculum. The overall philosophy for development of each of the versions of this curriculum has been to set Christian morality in the context of both cognitive understanding and personal commitment. The introduction to the teacher explains this dependence of Christian morality on cognition and experience.

Christian moral and ethical teachings cannot be properly understood as simply a series of proscriptions and prohibitions; a list of do's and don'ts. Down through the centuries Christians have believed that individuals should obey Christian moral teachings because the Christian world view is an accurate reflection of reality. Another distinctive of Christian morality is that it can only be understood fully if it is seen in the context of a personal growing relationship with God. So, in addition to explaining what Christians believe about various moral issues, this curriculum will attempt to set those teachings in their proper

¹²⁵ Teacher convocations (now expanded to four days) have been held in Russia, Estonia, Ukraine, Latvia, Bulgaria, Albania, Belarus and Romania.

¹²⁶ There are now requests for convocations in various countries in Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. In August 1995 the present writer will begin work on a new unit of the curriculum dealing with AIDS education. Although this curriculum has not yet been officially published in an American English version, there is the possibility that an edition will soon be available for use in Christian day schools and Sunday schools. The curriculum is currently available in 15 translations, primarily languages currently in use in schools in the former Soviet Union.

larger context of Christian truth claims and an individual spiritual relationship.¹²⁷

The desire of the curriculum development team to balance these three emphases (morality, evidence and relationship) was carried out by a series of 9 units each of which focused on one of the three emphases.¹²⁸ Following is a listing of the units and individual lesson titles.

UNIT 1: MAKING SENSE OF MOTIVES

1. Why Do You Do What You Do?
2. Finding Your Moral Motivation
3. Two Kinds of Love
4. The Golden Rule

UNIT 2: WHO SHOULD WE FOLLOW?

5. Man Without Equal
6. A Unique Claim
7. Exploring the Possibilities

UNIT 3: HOW THE JOURNEY BEGINS

8. Coming Home
9. Opening the Door
10. Finding Acceptance

UNIT 4: EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE

11. Four Tests Of Truth
12. Has the Bible Changed?
13. Is the Bible Trustworthy?
14. What Really Happened?

UNIT 5: THE BENEFITS OF BOUNDARIES

15. Are There Absolutes?
16. The Value of Integrity
17. Healthy Relationships
18. Family Ties
19. Reaching Your Potential

¹²⁷ Paul Eshleman and Curt Mackey, eds., Christian Ethics and Morality: A Foundation for Society (San Clemente, International School Project, 1994), v. This and all other references are to the pre-translation English version finalized Fall, 1994.

¹²⁸ There are actually eight units in the regular sequence and an optional "Bible Club Starter Kit" of five lessons designed to be taught at any point in after-school student meetings.

UNIT 6: THE FOUNDATION GOD PROVIDES

- 20. Does God Make A Difference?
- 21. How Do We Know God Exists?
- 22. What Is God Like?

UNIT 7: EXPLORING CRITICAL ISSUES

- 23. Making Sense Out of Suffering?
- 24. What Happened to the Human Race?
- 25. Honest Answers to Real Questions

UNIT 8: THE JOURNEY TO MATURITY

- 26. The Pattern for Moral Character
- 27. The Challenge of Forgiveness
- 28. The Art of Encouragement
- 29. Changing Your World
- 30. Continuing Toward Maturity

- Bible Club “Starter Kit”
 - WEEK 1 Developing Your New Life: Fellowship
 - WEEK 2 Developing Your New Life: Holy Spirit
 - WEEK 3 Developing Your New Life: Growth
 - WEEK 4 Developing Your New Life: Bible
 - WEEK 5 Developing Your New Life: Talking With God¹²⁹

This curriculum is designed so that during the course of the lessons students are exposed to the three emphases in roughly equal proportions. This balance is introduced to the teachers in the introduction.

[E]ach of the 8 units reflects one of three basic themes of the overall curriculum

A.) Christian Moral Teaching. Units 1, 5, and 8 give students an introduction to what Jesus and his followers have taught on such topics as love, integrity, work, and encouragement.

B.) Christian Truth Claims: Units 2, 4, and 6 allow students to explore the question, “Is Christianity true?” They will consider such subjects as the nature of truth, the reliability of the Bible, and the existence and nature of God.

C.) Personal Spiritual Relationship: Units 3 and 7 introduce the distinctive Christian teaching that every individual can

¹²⁹ Eshleman and Mackey, iii-iv.

have a personal, intimate relationship with his or her Creator. These lessons will deal with such Christian themes as suffering, sin, and forgiveness. (Note: the 5 lessons of the Bible Club starter kit also deal with developing a personal relationship with God.)¹³⁰

While the moral or ethical lessons (category A) will not play a large part in illustrating how an evangelical curriculum could embody an understanding of faith as trust, the B and C category lessons will be so employed. The sections on "Christian Truth Claims" reflect the importance of faith including assent to certain propositions of Christian belief. The units that deal with "Personal Spiritual Relationship" are aimed at helping students toward a personal, passionate commitment to Christ. Following are examples from individual lessons which illustrate these emphases.

Lessons which encourage rational assent. There are two distinct types of rationalistic emphases discernible in the lesson which make up these units. Some of the lessons give students the opportunity to interact with apologetic arguments for the truth of certain propositions of Christian belief. Other lessons focus more on simply explaining what beliefs Christians hold (often in contradistinction to other religions or philosophies.) These latter lessons are not arguments that Christianity is true but rather clarifications of what the Bible says and what many Christians understand it to mean. Both types of rationalistic lessons will be illustrated.

An example of a lesson with the apologetic sort of rational focus can be found in Lesson 7, "Exploring the Possibilities." The bulk of the lesson is comprised of a 45-minute workshop looking at three possible

¹³⁰ Eshleman and Mackey, v.

ways to view the person of Jesus in light of the statements credited to Him in the New Testament. At the beginning of this workshop the teacher gives the following instructions. (Text capitalized and in brackets are instructions to the teacher.)

For the next few minutes, we are going to divide into three groups. Each group will consider one of the first three options: that Jesus was a legend, a liar or a lunatic. I would like each group to prepare an argument against one of these views. When you are finished, I will have a short debate with a representative from each group. So, when you get into your groups, you need to do three things:

1. Choose someone to speak for your group. This person will be having a short debate with me when we return from our groups.
2. Look at the arguments given for and against your group's question. Suggest other arguments which your leader might use in the debate.
3. As a group, discuss the strategy your leader should use in the debate.

[DIVIDE THE CLASS INTO THREE EQUAL GROUPS. MAKE SURE EACH GROUP KNOWS WHICH QUESTION THEY ARE TO PREPARE TO DEBATE. AS THE GROUPS WORK, CIRCULATE, LISTEN AND BE AVAILABLE TO HELP ANY GROUP WHICH SEEMS CONFUSED OR IS HAVING TROUBLE.

WHEN TIME IS UP, ASK THE REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE FIRST GROUP TO STAND AT THE FRONT OF THE ROOM. BEGIN THE "DEBATE" BY STATING ONE OR MORE OF THE "TEACHER ARGUMENTS." OPTION: YOU MAY ALSO WANT TO BRING THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GROUP UP FRONT DURING THE DEBATE TO PROMPT OR ASSIST THE REPRESENTATIVE. OR YOU MAY WANT TO GIVE OTHER MEMBERS A CHANCE TO ADD ADDITIONAL POINTS WHEN EACH DEBATE IS COMPLETE. WHEN THIS FIRST GROUP IS FINISHED, YOU MAY WISH TO SUMMARIZE THE MAIN ISSUES, CLARIFY OR ADD POINTS THAT WERE MISSED. WHEN YOU

HAVE FINISHED WITH THE "LEGEND" ISSUE GO ON TO
THE NEXT TWO POINTS.]¹³¹

While the primary objective of this lesson is to familiarize students with some basic arguments for the deity of Christ, the method, arranging debates between student representatives and the teacher, is intended to engage the emotions, first through group preparation and then through the confrontation of the debates themselves. Notice that the students are placed in the role of defending the deity of Christ and the teacher is cast in the role of questioner or skeptic.

To enable students who may have no prior familiarity with the Bible or the issues involved in the lesson, possible arguments (for teacher and student) are given in a student handout. The handout for the first debate includes the following suggested arguments.

I. WAS JESUS A LEGEND? 10 MINUTES

TEACHER ARGUMENTS:

Maybe Jesus never lived at all. Or maybe He was just a simple moral teacher and His later followers developed the myths about His being a miracle worker who claimed to be God.

POSSIBLE STUDENT RESPONSES:

Jesus was a real person who claimed that He was God. The histories of His life were written so soon after His death that they could not be legends.

A. JESUS WAS NOT A LEGEND.

1. Jesus was a real person in history.

¹³¹ Eshleman and Mackey, 7.3. In this English version (which was not intended for English publication, but only as a master text for translation, pages are numbered within lessons. So this seventh lesson begins with page "7.1" and ends with page "7.11."

a. Historians confirm some of the events of Jesus' life including the Roman historian Tacitus, the Jewish historian Josephus, and other ancient Jewish writings.

b. More importantly, the Bible is a very unusual record in ancient history. There we find four accounts, written by four different authors--Matthew, Mark, Luke and John--about this one person, Jesus. We have more historical evidence about Jesus than most, if not all, ancient people.

2. The books in the Bible that tell about Jesus were written so soon after the events in His life that they could not be myth or legend.

Most scholars agree that all of the four books about Jesus' life--Matthew, Mark, Luke and John--were written while people who knew Him were still alive. The very latest they could have been written was between 70-100 A.D. Many current scholars believe that Matthew, Mark and Luke were completed no later than 45-85 A.D. We know that Jesus died about 30 A.D., therefore these books were written very close to His actual lifetime. We can then conclude that there was not enough time between Jesus' life and the time that these books were written for people of that day to forget the true facts and endorse some clearly false myth.

B. JESUS WAS NO ORDINARY MAN.

1. Later followers did not create the idea that Christ was a miracle worker. Jesus himself believed He had the power to perform miracles. (See Matthew 11:2-5.)

It is also clear that Jesus believed He was more than an ordinary man. Jesus said He could forgive sins (Mark 2:4-7). Jesus allowed and even encouraged people to worship Him (Matthew 16:13-17 and John 20:28-29).

2. Many times Jesus claimed to be God. He said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). He said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). And He made it clear that people's response to Him would determine their eternal destiny (see Matthew 10:32-33).¹³²

In addition the teacher is provided with supplementary arguments to use at her discretion which do not appear in the student handout.

¹³² Eshleman and Mackey, 7.3-7.4.

F.F. Bruce, professor of biblical criticism at Great Britain's University of Manchester, wrote, "the historicity of Christ is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar."

Professor A.N. Sherwin White, a classical historian at Oxford, studied the rate at which myths were formed in the ancient near east. He concluded that even two full generations (50-80 years) would not be enough time for legendary elements to wipe out the hard core of historical fact.

Even the most skeptical scholars now accept that the four gospels were completed within 70 years of Jesus' death.¹³³

The intent of this lesson is primarily cognitive, to foster assent to the proposition, "Jesus is God."¹³⁴ However it is carried out in a manner intended to help foster eventual passionate commitment (at least on the part of some of the students).¹³⁵

¹³³ Eshleman and Mackey, 7.4-7.5.

¹³⁴ However, the free will of the student is respected by the lesson design where students workshop their arguments together and the teacher plays the role of the skeptic, not the dogmatist. In the teacher introduction the teacher was previously exhorted to honor the choices of her students in a section entitled, "The Power of Voluntary Commitment." "One of the benefits of Christianity is that it appeals to the individual heart and conscience. When students freely choose to follow Christ, they are transformed from within in a way that surpasses the effects of any imposed ethical system. One of the dangers of teaching religious ethics in a state-supported school is that students may see it as imposed morality or enforced belief. The desire of the writers is for the curriculum to result in neither. When Christianity and Christian morality have been studied in an atmosphere where belief is optional and voluntary, many individual lives are transformed and those individuals go on to constructively influence their society." See Eshleman and Mackey, xi.

¹³⁵ Some Western readers of these lessons have questioned if this sort of intellectual debate is not too advanced for the ninth grade. First it should be noted that Russian ninth graders average about one year older than American students. Second, the experience of nearly all Western teachers in interacting with secondary students in the former Soviet Union is that they are intellectually advanced compared to American students of the same age. Third, a number of apologetically cognitive lessons similar to this one have been field tested in previous versions of this curriculum. It was

The second sort of lesson which is intended to lead to assent to propositions is the type which is aimed more at informing than persuading. An example of this sort is found in Lesson 22, What is God Like? This lesson begins with a short lecture by the teacher explaining three views of God.

[BRIEFLY EXPLAIN EACH VIEW, WRITING THE MAIN IDEAS (SHOWN BELOW) ON THE CHALKBOARD AS YOU TALK.]

A. GOD IS EVERYTHING AND EVERYTHING IS GOD (PANTHEISM)

Some Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism) and spiritualism (New Age Movements) use the word "god" to refer to everything that exists or to a universal force or spirit that flows through everything and binds it together. This view sees god as existing within the universe. For these religions, it is just as true to say "God is in the tree" or "God is in the rock" as it is to say "God is in that person."

The god of pantheism has no limits (is infinite) but is not personal. In fact, most Eastern religions are not comfortable in referring to this god as "he."

Some pantheists don't really believe that individual people exist. Although we think we are separate people, these pantheists would say this is a mistake, an illusion. They would say that Ivan, Natasha, and Sasha [SUBSTITUTE NAMES OF STUDENTS IN YOUR CLASS] are really not separate people at all. You are really all just a part of what we call 'god.'

For pantheists, there is also no real good or evil. Everything is a part of God. God is bigger than what we humans call "good" and "evil" and god includes both. Therefore, instead of fighting to change poverty, or unfairness, or hunger, we should just learn to ignore it and it won't bother us anymore. Pain and suffering are not real anyway; they are an illusion. When something bad happens to us, the pain we feel isn't real anyway. We are all a part of God and evil doesn't exist!

often these lessons which were the most popular both with students and teachers.

B. THERE ARE MANY GODS (POLYTHEISM)

Many of the traditional religions of the world teach that there are many gods. This is the view of Greek, Roman, and Norse mythology and also the Mormons [THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST, LATTER DAY SAINTS].

The gods of polytheism are quite personal but are also limited in many ways. The gods do not always agree and sometimes are even locked in eternal combat [AS IN ZOROASTRIANISM]. In polytheism, some gods are good and some are evil.

C. THERE IS ONE PERSONAL GOD (THEISM)

Several major religions (including Christianity) teach that God is personally involved with His creation. This is one of the ways the God of the Bible is very different from the gods of many of the world's religions. Christians see God as having no limits of any kind (infinite) and yet He is very personally involved with the world and the people He has made.

Theists view God as righteous (completely good). In fact the riddle we solved at the beginning of class assumes a theistic view of God.¹³⁶ If you asked a polytheist, "what is better than God?", she might answer, "Which god do you mean?" For a pantheist, the riddle just doesn't make sense. Nothing is better than god (since god is everything), but nothing is *worse* than god either, since "god" includes everything, including everything we label as evil!

The lesson then progresses into a workshop in groups. Notice that the major thrust of this workshop, unlike the one in Lesson 7, is to clarify the distinction between Christianity and other world views, not, per se, to make any argument that the Bible or Christianity is true or better than other views.

Now in a few minutes I'm going to play the role of one of these three, a theist who believes in one personal God, a polytheist who believes there are many gods, or a pantheist who believes god is everything and everything is god. And your job is going to be to try to figure out which I am

¹³⁶ The class began with the students trying to solve the riddle, "What is better than God; worse than Satan. Dead men eat it. If you eat it, you'll die!" See Eshleman and Mackey, 22.2.

by asking questions. So for the next few minutes I want you to get in groups and think about some questions you could ask me to try and determine which of these three I am.

[DIVIDE THE CLASS INTO THREE GROUPS. INSTRUCT THEM TO DECIDE IN THEIR GROUP WHO WILL BE THE QUESTIONER WHO WILL INTERVIEW YOU. THE REST OF THE TIME IN GROUPS SHOULD BE SPENT WRITING DOWN QUESTIONS THE DESIGNATED INTERVIEWER CAN ASK YOU TO DETERMINE THE VIEW YOU HOLD. AFTER ABOUT 5-10 MINUTES, CALL THE CLASS BACK TOGETHER AND ASK ONE OF THE GROUPS TO HAVE THEIR INTERVIEWER STAND UP FRONT AND ASK SOME OF THE QUESTIONS THE GROUP HAS SUGGESTED. THE ONLY QUESTIONS THEY MAY NOT ASK ARE, "ARE YOU A THEIST, PANTHEIST, OR POLYTHEIST?", ETC. AS YOU PLAY THE ROLE OF THE POLYTHEIST, ETC., YOUR GOAL SHOULD BE TO NOT HAVE THE INTERVIEWER IDENTIFY YOU ON THE FIRST QUESTION, BUT TO EVENTUALLY BE ABLE TO FIGURE OUT WHICH YOU ARE. ALL NAMES OF THESE GROUPS ARE IMAGINARY, ALTHOUGH THE BELIEFS REPRESENT THOSE COMMON IN REAL ORGANIZATIONS.]

1. Hello, I am a member of the Universal World Church. Would you care to ask me some questions about what we believe?

[LISTEN TO THE STUDENT'S QUESTIONS AND ANSWER THEM AS IF YOU WERE A PANTHEIST, A MEMBER OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT. SEE THE APPENDIX OF JESUS: A BIBLICAL DEFENSE OF HIS DEITY BY JOSH MCDOWELL AND BART LARSON FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THESE VARIOUS GROUPS. YOU ARE PLAYING THE ROLE OF SOMEONE WHO THINKS EVERYTHING LIVING AND NON-LIVING IS INTERCONNECTED. GOD IS INSIDE OF YOU AND EVERY PERSON. HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU MIGHT RESPOND TO TYPICAL STUDENT QUESTIONS.]

"Do you believe there is one God?" Yes.

"Do you believe there are many Gods?" Yes. [Everything is a part of the one god. But each person is god, so in that sense, there are many.]

"Is Jesus God?" Yes. Jesus was a manifestation of God. (Just as we all are, though he showed the divine nature more fully than most others.)

"Is God infinite?" Yes, there are no limits to God. [We humans also have infinite potential, since we are god in our basic nature.]

[WHEN THE STUDENT HAS ASKED ENOUGH QUESTIONS TO BE ABLE TO GUESS WHICH VIEW YOU HOLD, ASK:]

Can you tell me which category I fit in? Am I a polytheist, a theist, or a pantheist? Why?

[WHETHER OR NOT THE STUDENT GETS THE RIGHT ANSWER, ASK THE MEMBERS OF HIS OR HER GROUP TO ADD ANY THOUGHTS OR OBSERVATIONS, THEN, IF THERE IS TIME, YOU CAN OPEN THE DISCUSSION UP TO THE REST OF THE CLASS. YOU ALSO MAY ASK:]

What other questions could you have asked to help determine my view?

[PROCEED IN THE SAME FASHION WITH THE NEXT TWO INTERVIEWS.]¹³⁷

The intent of this lesson is to inform, not to persuade. The lesson concludes by the teacher warning the students. "You can see that it is not always easy to tell what people believe about God from the name of their church or even the first thing they may say. We need to carefully ask questions if we want to truly understand what different people believe about God."¹³⁸

Two types of lessons have been illustrated, which are representative of the more cognitively oriented material in this curriculum. The apologetic lessons foster assent to particular propositions concerning Christ and Christianity by giving a rational basis for assent. The more informational lessons encourage the same objective by helping students to make informed decisions, that is, to give (or withhold) assent to accurately understood propositions.

¹³⁷ Eshleman and Mackey, 22.4.

¹³⁸ Eshleman and Mackey, 22.5.

Lessons which encourage passionate commitment. As indicated in the teacher introduction previously quoted, Units 3 and 7 focus on the distinctive Christian (evangelical) teaching that individuals can have a personal relationship with God through Christ. It should be noted that the curriculum developers faced an unusual, if not unprecedented challenge in writing this curriculum. The curriculum had to be capable of being taught by educators who themselves had only a brief exposure to Christianity at a four day professional meeting. Most of these teachers were not professing Christians and, in fact, the majority have been formally educated in the "principles of scientific Marxism." Further, many of the students have received no previous exposure to Christianity either at home, church or school. While the charge from the Ministry of Education was that the curriculum was to be explicitly Christian in orientation, the curriculum team understood that Russia and most of the other republics (now independent nations once again) had formal laws separating church and state. While these laws are being interpreted rather differently than is current practice in the United States, a majority of the curriculum team believed that wide acceptance of the curriculum required the maintenance of an objective tone so that a non-Christian teacher could, in good conscience, teach these lessons in a state-supported, secular school.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ This was not, however, the unanimous opinion of all who initially developed the first edition of the secondary curriculum. The present writer played a significant role in maintaining a more objective stance in the language of the lessons. See Alan Scholes, "The Church-State Puzzle in The Soviet Classroom," Christianity Today, Nov. 25, 1991, 24-25.

remove parenthesis

Also-check pg. nos. in Bib.

Grasping this issue is important to a proper interpretation of the lessons which focus on personal commitment to Christ. If these same lessons had been written primarily for use in evangelical Sunday school classes or Christian schools, the statements about the necessity for personal passionate commitment would have sounded far stronger. One of the ways the team sought to deal with this challenge was to frequently give the teacher two options, one which, it was hoped, could be used even in a more hostile environment where teachers felt the need to be cautious. The other option was usually more direct in encouraging students toward personal commitment, while still retaining an emphasis on individual responsibility and choice.

In Lesson 25, "Honest Answers to Real Questions," the teacher is given the following explanation of the options which will be available at the end of the lesson.

This lesson will deal with several common misconceptions and other barriers which often keep students from accepting Christianity. The purpose of this lesson is not to coerce anyone to become a Christian, rather to help insure that every student's decision is as informed as possible.

Near the end of the lesson, you will find two options, "A" and "B." Option A informs your students regarding the decision they need to make. Option B includes a suggested prayer which interested students are encouraged to pray silently as you read it aloud. Following are some guidelines you may find helpful in deciding which option is most appropriate for your class.

OPTION A: You may wish to choose this option if:

--The administration of your school is concerned about maintaining a strict separation of Church and State.

--You (the teacher) have not yet chosen to begin a personal relationship with God through Christ.

--A number of the parents of your students are active believers in another major religion (such as Judaism or

Islam) and would likely not wish their children to be present when a Christian prayer is being offered.

OPTION B: You may wish to choose this option if:

--The class is being taught in an after school or other enrichment context where attendance is voluntary.

--You know that all or nearly all of the students' families are Christian or open to Christianity.

--Your school administration has been highly supportive and encouraged you to be open and direct with the students.¹⁴⁰

Unfortunately scientific study of curriculum use has been impossible in the chaos of the former Soviet Union, so there is no reliable way to determine which of the two options has most often been used. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, it is still possible to use lessons of this sort to illustrate how the emphasis on personal commitment might be carried out in curricular form.

Near the end of the lesson are the two options.

[AT THIS POINT YOU SHOULD CONTINUE WITH EITHER "OPTION A" OR "OPTION B." SEE TEACHER BACKGROUND AT THE BEGINNING OF THE LESSON FOR IDEAS ON HOW TO CHOOSE THE MOST APPROPRIATE OPTION FOR YOUR CLASS.]

[OPTION A]

Throughout this course, we have stressed the importance of voluntary commitment. One of the things that makes biblical Christianity different than most other philosophies, religions or ideologies in the world is the Christian belief that God does not force Himself on us. Like a man proposing marriage to a woman he loves, the Bible portrays God as doing everything possible to show us that He loves us. Then, through Christ, he comes and says, "I want to have an eternal love relationship with you. Will you have Me?" Like the woman who receives the marriage proposal, we must say "yes" if the relationship is going to continue and grow deeper. Someone put it this way, "God is a gentle-

¹⁴⁰ Eshleman and Mackey, 25.2.

man. He will not come into our lives unless we invite Him."

In our closing activity today I would like you to write a letter to God. Express to Him exactly what you are thinking and feeling right now. For some, this might be, "I'm not yet sure I believe you exist." Others of you may want to thank God for something or someone in your life you particularly appreciate. Some of you may wish to ask Christ to come into your life for the first time through this letter. Whatever you write is your own choice and is strictly between you and God.

[OPTION B]

The Bible teaches that the way we begin a relationship with God through Christ is by an act of the will. Like a man proposing marriage to a woman he loves, the Bible portrays God as doing everything possible to show us that He loves us. Then, through Christ, he comes and says, "I want to have an eternal love relationship with you. Will you have Me?" Like the woman who receives the marriage proposal, we must say "yes" if the relationship is going to continue and grow deeper. Someone put it this way, "God is a gentleman. He will not come into our lives unless we invite Him."

I know that some of you have already made this decision: you have already said, "yes" to God's proposal. Maybe some others of you have decided not to allow Him to come into your lives or want still more time to think about it. But I imagine there are some of you who are ready today, for the first time, to begin this kind of personal relationship with God. For the sake of those who may wish to do so, in a moment I am going to say a simple prayer out loud. If you have already accepted Christ or if you do not wish to at this time, please just listen quietly. But if you would like to begin a personal relationship with God today, you can pray silently along with me as I pray out loud.

[READ THE FOLLOWING PRAYER SLOWLY, PHRASE BY PHRASE, SO THAT STUDENTS WHO WISH TO MAY PRAY EACH PHRASE AFTER YOU SILENTLY.]

"Dear God, I want to accept your offer of a relationship. I admit that I have sinned and have been cut off from your life and a relationship with you. I accept Jesus' death as your way of forgiving my sin and opening the door to a new relationship with you. I now invite you to come into

my life and live with me and begin to make me into the person You want me to be."¹⁴¹

Although Option B is a stronger encouragement toward passionate personal commitment, Option A gives at least some indication of emotional engagement (through the analogy of a proposal of marriage) and reiterates the theme of voluntary commitment. Option B makes clear, especially in the final line of the suggested prayer, that coming into a relationship with God involves opening oneself and allowing, in fact inviting, God to bring about change. While this is not as strong as most lordship advocates would desire, it reflects a stronger sort of commitment than Hodges would deem necessary.¹⁴²

Whichever option has been chosen the lesson then ends with a an offer to talk personally and a brief story.

If any of you would like to meet personally with me to talk further about what we have discussed in this lesson, I would be glad to do so.

Here is a story to think about:

It seems that a peasant was sentenced to the arena where the ruler of the kingdom enjoyed the sport of torturing some of his subjects. The peasant's life was on the line as he faced 2 doors. Behind one door was a man-eating lion, ready to devour him at the first opportunity. Behind the other door was one who loved him more than life itself.

The ruler leaned over the battlement and commanded the peasant to choose one of the doors. The peasant had a simple thought. "If only there was a small window cut in each of the doors I would know what to choose."

Christians believe that is exactly what God has done through His Son, His Word (the Bible) and His Spirit. He has cut a window in the door, showing us His uncondi-

¹⁴¹ Eshleman and Mackey, 25.8-9.

¹⁴² Hodges and other strong free grace advocates would likely end the prayer after the second sentence.

tional love. Thus, the decision you have to make is not a blind guess. If Christians are right, we can know which door to open to find the one who loves us more than life itself. It is the door of our own hearts and lives.

Both the offer to meet and the story are significant in our analysis of this curriculum from the point of view of an understanding of faith as trust. The curriculum writers have encouraged the teacher to offer to meet privately with students because they believe that modeling and the transfer of faith often comes from the example of one human to another. This is consistent with the understanding of the continuity of faith between general, vital, and saving. For a student to see the teacher as an individual believer (or perhaps another sincere searcher) opens a greater possibility of a transfer of faith through modeling. Also, simply coming to trust the sincerity of the teacher through more personal contact is a form of interpersonal faith enhancement. If a student can come to trust the teacher who as one who is sincere about her faith (or even her doubts), the student has taken a significant step toward his or her own eventual placing faith in God.

The story is an interesting choice because it weaves existential rational elements of faith in three brief paragraphs. If the story stopped before the man mentioned the possibility of a window, it would be a very Kierkegaardian situation (except that for Kierkegaard the risk, especially in Fear and Trembling, is that God, the One Who supposedly loves you, might actually turn out to be the ravenous lion.) But then the situation is (potentially) modified. In the context of the preceding units the "window" might well be understood by the students to be the evidence for the existence of God, the deity of

Christ, and the reliability of the Bible. Therefore it is a momentous choice we must make, but it is not a blind choice.¹⁴³

Sketch of an Evangelical Theory of Education Based on Faith as Trust

This outline of an evangelical theory of education based on faith as trust will include the following elements: a statement of the goal of Christian education, a description of the context of Christian education, and suggestions for methodology in Christian education.

The Goal of Christian Education

A brief statement of the proposed goal of evangelical Christian education is:

To encourage individuals toward:

lives of informed passionate trust in God

and

ministries of fostering vital trust in all areas of human life.

Several terms in this definition may be elaborated as follows.

“Encourage . . . toward” is a recognition that the educational enterprise is not a precise science nor a mechanistic production line. Since faith is viewed as a choice to be freely entered, it can only be encouraged, not precisely controlled. Additionally, these terms recognize that the Holy Spirit cannot be captured or harnessed within an educational program. We can encourage toward faith, only God can give the

¹⁴³ It should be acknowledged that one element of the conception of faith as trust as adjusted in Chapter 5 is missing from this curriculum. Nowhere does this curriculum explicitly raise the idea of God the Holy Spirit giving the occasion for an encounter with Christ. This is a concept which could benefit the curriculum with its inclusion, probably in one of the later lessons.

occasion. "Individuals" is a recognition that a crucial aspect of the cordial trust that leads to an intimate relationship with God, is the decision of an existing individual. The term is not meant to imply that much of the educational enterprise will not take place in group settings. In fact, Carnell's understanding that human relationships of vital faith are a foundation for eventual cordial trust in God would require that human interrelatedness (group relations no less than individual friendships) must be the context of faith development.

"Lives" is a recognition that the purpose of Christian education does not begin and end with the initial experience of saving faith. Rather the process of Christian education begins (ideally) at birth and continues throughout life. "Informed" is a recognition that knowing God is built on the foundation of knowing about God. A legitimate part of educational nurture is imparting cognitive propositional understanding. This would include (but not be limited to) biblical and apologetic teaching. "Passionate" is a recognition that the affective sphere is as important in genuine trust as the cognitive. Christian education must be designed and implemented in such a way as to engage the emotions, conscience, and volition as well as the mind. "Passionate" is also meant as a reminder that room must be left in the educational agenda for the Holy Spirit to work when and as God wills. Passionate cordial trust in God is an aspect of the goal of Christian education but should never be regarded as a product of it.

"Ministries" is meant to be a broad term that could include any positive intentional (and perhaps even some non-intentional) human enterprise. "Fostering" like "encourage toward" is meant to leave

room for the work of God and the agency of free human response. "Vital trust" is meant to include the widest spectrum of constructive human relationships and interpersonal interaction from the exchange of a smile or nod with a stranger on a street to lifetime partnership and sexual intimacy. "All areas of human life" is meant to include every possible sphere of human existence: religious, recreational, social, vocational, political, etc.

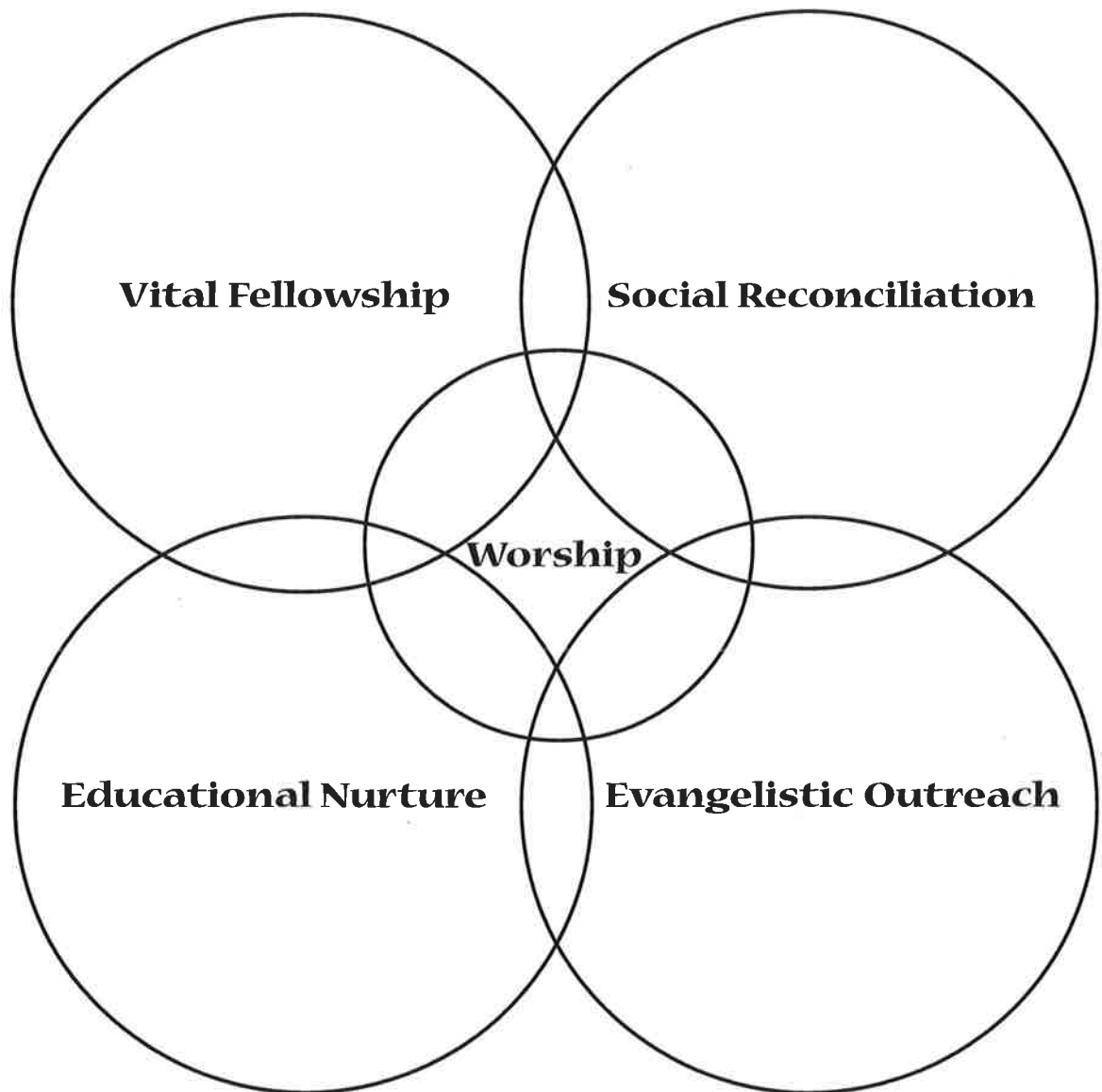
The Context of Christian Education

The section will describe the place of Christian education in the body of Christ in general and more specifically within a local church.¹⁴⁴ This will be accomplished by proposing a paradigm of the purposes of the church and suggesting the role Christian education should play in that paradigm.

In this conception of the church, there are five interrelated aspects of church life: worship, vital fellowship, social reconciliation, evangelistic outreach, and educational nurture. The relation between these five aspects can be diagrammed with a central circle (worship) surrounded and overlapped by four interlocking circles, each representing the other four aspects (see figure).¹⁴⁵ Each of the five aspects can be defined and elaborated as follows.

¹⁴⁴ "Body of Christ" is meant to refer to the Church universal. In common evangelical understanding this would include every living person who has trusted in God with genuine saving faith.

¹⁴⁵ One inadequacy of this diagram is that all of the outer circles should overlap with each other (i.e., social reconciliation should overlap vital fellowship and evangelistic outreach should overlap educational nurture.) The order in which the four aspects are arranged around the center is arbitrary and interchangeable.



Worship. This represents the center of the believer's informed passionate trust in God, her absolute telos. The term, worship was chosen for its original Old English meaning of "worth ship."¹⁴⁶ If God as absolute telos deserves absolute devotion, then times and settings to remember, acknowledge, and celebrate God's worth should be the focal point of the believer and the church and should take priority over other aspects of church life. Worship would include private, small group, and corporate worship. A theory of evangelical Christian education based on faith as trust sees the highest expression of that faith is the informed passionate worship of God.

Vital fellowship.¹⁴⁷ Since vital trust in interpersonal relationships is the context in which we can best develop the capacity for informed passionate trust in God, fellowship with Christian believers (including family members)¹⁴⁸ can be one of life's most powerful experiences.¹⁴⁹ Evangelical ministry professionals have sometimes neglected this area,

¹⁴⁶ The English word, worship is from worthscip, a variant of weothscipe which was derived from two Old English words, weorth (worth) and scipe (ship). See "Worship," World Book Dictionary, 1985.

¹⁴⁷ The four following aspects of church life could be listed in any order, since all four are viewed as having equal priority. Educational nurture is listed last to facilitate commentary on its relation to the other three aspects.

¹⁴⁸ Family is being used here in the broad sense of those with whom a person lives and is in a significant degree of emotional interdependence. This would include traditional nuclear families, single parent and adoptive families, and those groups of two or more unrelated by law or genetics who have significant emotional connection. Temporary roommates of convenience where there is little emotional connection or interaction would not be considered families.

¹⁴⁹ Since these relationships also carry the equal and opposite power to alienate individuals from God, this area should be given substantial priority.

relegating it to a kind of necessary evil. “The saints need their parties” or “people won’t come unless we serve food.” A theory of Christian education based on faith as trust sees the dimension of vital fellowship as a primary context for learning about ourselves and learning cordial trust.

Social reconciliation. Christians live in the social and political context of a world that is fraught with myriad expressions of mistrust. Racism, war, rape, child abuse, hate crimes, inner-city turf wars, substance abuse, all are symptoms of various forms of mistrust.¹⁵⁰ As believers who are learning to trust God and each other, Christians need to be finding creative ways to restore trust where it has been breached. This can cover a wide gamut, from showing patient love and concern to someone who is mistrustful of all authority due to childhood abuse, to working to reform a corrupt legal system so that citizens will have reason to place informed trust in it.

Evangelistic outreach. If a Christian has an informed passionate trust in God, a consistent expression of that trust would be to commend the worship of God to others who may be uninformed or mistrustful. The dual emphasis on the freedom of humans to choose and on the Holy Spirit as the Teacher who is the occasion, requires believers to avoid any methodology that would involve misinformation

¹⁵⁰ This is not an attempt to oversimplify these complex social and political problems. Nor is this an assertion that all problems are caused by mistrust or could be solved by increased trust. This writer agrees with Carnell and Kierkegaard that the root error of the human race is properly named sin. Rather, the observation is that as we have fallen away from trust in God we have also fallen out of a proper relationship with other humans and with ourselves.

of manipulation. Helping others toward an attitude of informed passionate trust requires honesty, integrity, and candor.

Educational nurture. The educational aspect of church life is distinguished by a servant mission. While social reconciliation and fellowship exist (at least partially) as good ends in themselves, educational nurture exists not for itself but to enhance the other four aspects.¹⁵¹ The goal of Christian education is dual in nature: its primary purpose is to encourage individuals toward lives characterized by informed passionate trust in God (worship); its secondary purpose is to encourage believers to engage in ministries which foster human trust in all areas (vital fellowship, social reconciliation, and evangelistic outreach).

The Methods of Christian Education

An understanding of faith as trust would lead a Christian educator to concentrate on methods which engage the emotions, will and conscience (the affective domain), as well as the intellect. Methods which foster positive human interrelatedness (and thereby strengthen bonds of vital faith) would be favored over methods which primarily accomplish narrowly cognitive or moral objectives. Teachers, leaders, and facilitators need to develop the perspective that their goals, plans, lesson outlines, etc., represent only one of three wills active in the learning process.¹⁵² Following are some suggestions as to how a

¹⁵¹ Evangelistic outreach also is not an end in itself, but serves primarily as a means to the end of worship.

¹⁵² The three wills are that of the human teacher, that of the learner, and the will of God, the Holy Spirit.

theory of Christian education based on faith as trust might work itself out in existing programs of a local church.

Sunday church school. Forty-five minutes once a week is not likely to be an effective venue for the acquisition and retention of significant volumes of cognitive content.¹⁵³ And yet, in many evangelical churches, this time period is seen as the primary vehicle for the indoctrination of children and (in conjunction with the Sunday sermon) even for adults. But the brief time once a week is probably a good time to initially establish (and to a limited degree, maintain) bonds of human relationship. This can be enhanced when the Sunday class is seen as the focal point of many other contacts during the week.¹⁵⁴

Short-term classes. Special interest subjects held other times than Sunday morning often attract people who do not yet feel like they completely belong. The announced subject matter is not as important to the development of faith as the effort of mature Christians to meet and build relationships with others during these events. This can be aided if the time is structured with non-lectured periods in the schedule (pairing up to work, small group discussions, break times, etc.).

¹⁵³ This amount of time is slight when viewed in the context of the 30 or more hours a week spent in school and many more watching television, especially as American culture becomes increasingly hostile to evangelical beliefs.

¹⁵⁴ These might include: a class telephone prayer chain to share requests and answers during the week, a class men's (or women's) breakfast once a month, regular class parties held in private homes, teachers making friendly phone calls during the week, etc. For children's classes, these could include: invitations to periodically come to the teacher's home, teacher calling or visiting selected students each week, special monthly outings, etc.

Retreats. This is potentially the most productive organized event with regard to faith development. The effects of a novel environment, relative freedom from responsibility, rooming and eating together with non-family, combine to make retreats powerful opportunities for establishing and/or deepening vital faith relations.

Family groups. As nuclear families become more isolated and non-traditional family structures proliferate, the church needs to find creative ways of unleashing the tremendous relational power inherent in all forms of family. Ideas might include: a buddy system for new parents (an older father or mother with grown children volunteers to help care for the baby and share parenting ideas for a certain number of months after a new birth), a restoration of the God-parent concept, where a church member takes specific spiritual responsibility for a young child, alternative night club for adult singles held once a month in a rented facility with cover charge and quality entertainment, etc.

Sunday sermon. Although it may seem surprising to see the morning message listed as an element of Christian education, in many churches it already serves that function. Especially in Protestant non-liturgical churches, the sermon is generally more related to doctrinal or moral teaching than it is to worship.¹⁵⁵ The suggestion here is that it be considered a part of the overall Christian education strategy and integrated into the other aspects of Christian education within the life of the church.

¹⁵⁵ Often evangelical congregations within liturgical traditions tend to be low church.

These heuristic suggestions have been intended more to stimulate than to inform. What is being advocated in this work is that the scholars and practitioners of evangelical Christian education take more seriously the task of reshaping Christian education through a process that involves conscious theological reflection. This modest work has been an attempt to engage in theological reflection concerning the nature of faith. Clearly other significant insights could be derived from similar reflection concerning the nature of humanity, of God, of spirituality, or of the church itself.

Conclusion

This dissertation has been a theological reflection around the issue, "What is the nature of faith?" First, two poles or extreme understandings of faith have been explored: John Locke's view of faith as mere assent to propositions and Soren Kierkegaard's understanding of faith as a passionate commitment. Then evangelical theologian E. J. Carnell's understanding of faith as trust was employed to develop a middle view of faith enhanced by three additional elements. The first is the addition of a Kierkegaard-like concept of Miracle as a condition for true saving faith. The second enhancement is a Lockean understanding of well-attested miracles as a rational basis for faith. The third element is a conception of trust as the underlying principle active within each of Carnell's forms of faith. This reconstructed understanding of faith was shown to contribute to the current evangelical dialogue regarding "lordship salvation."

The resulting view of faith was employed as a criterion for critiquing several evangelical educational theorists and curricula and then

formed the basis for a sketch of a theory of evangelical Christian education based on faith as trust.

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